Commentary

Volume Seventy-five, Number Two, February 1983

Bialik's Hint
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he Hollywood & ther Quartets
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BOOKS:
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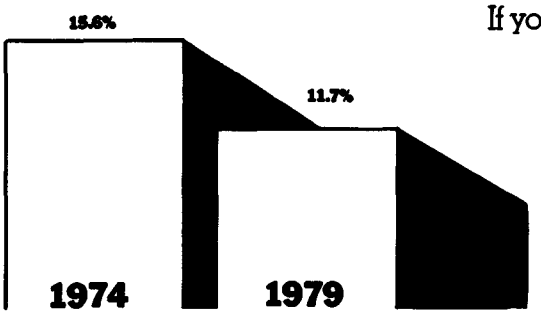

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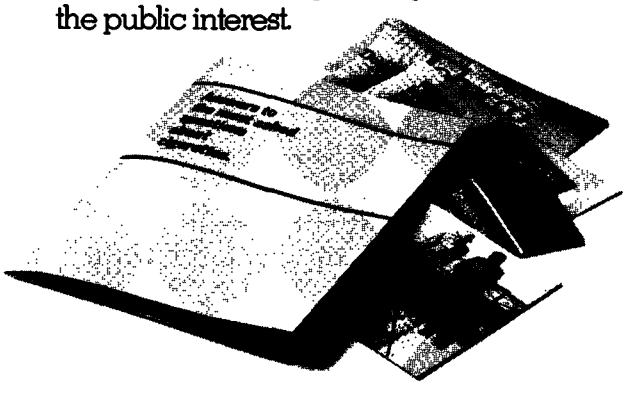

WEIGH BOTH SIDES BEFORE YOU TAKE SIDES.

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Commentary

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Cover: The Drawing Board, Inc.

COMMENTARY is published monthly by the American Jewish Committee—Single Copy is $3.00, $30 a year; 3 years $81; 5 years $120—Add $5.00 per year for all foreign, including Canada and Latin America—Second class postage paid at New York, N.Y. and at additional mailing offices.

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Publication Number ISSN 0010-2601
EDITORIAL & BUSINESS OFFICES: *165 E. 56th St., New York, N.Y. 10022*

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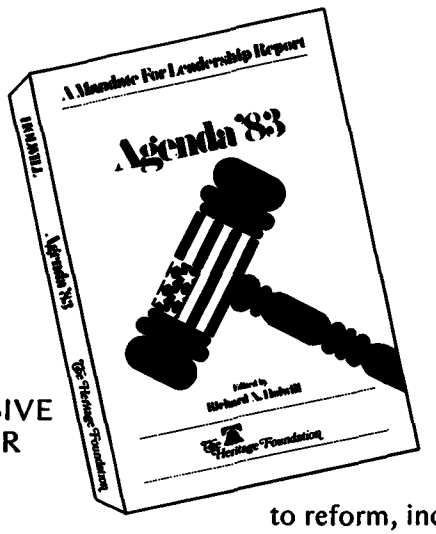

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Letters from Readers

Socialism

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Midge Decter has written a perceptive article on Irving Howe ["Socialism & Its Irresponsibilities: The Case of Irving Howe," December 1982]. As an old East Bronx comrade of Howe's and as a founding member of the Schachtmanite Workers party, I disagree with some of her comments.

I joined the Young People's Socialist League (YPSL) in 1932 at the age of fourteen. After the victories of Hitler in 1933 and Dollfuss in 1934, YPSL turned sharply Left. The lessons drawn from the European experiences were that social-democratic reformism had failed and that only revolutionary Marxism could save the world from fascism. Stalinism was rejected because the realities of Stalin's Russia were already known to the members of YPSL. We were also highly critical of the Comintern's criminal policy of "social fascism" that abetted Hitler's rise to power. Therefore when the Trotskyites entered the Socialist party in 1936, they found the new cadres waiting for them.

In 1940 the Trotskyite Socialist Workers party split. The issue was the defense of the USSR in the Russo-Finnish war. The real issue was the class nature of the Soviet state—whether Russia remained a degenerated workers' state or whether it represented a new form of class rule that we called "bureaucratic collectivism."

Howe is correct in indicating that the basic position of the Workers party on the war was "critical support" and that of course we recognized the enormous differences between an Allied victory and a Nazi victory. After all, Trotsky had written many pamphlets assailing the Comintern's Third Period policy on the question of the difference between capitalist democracy and fascism.

Miss Decter simplifies the third-camp position of the Schachtmanites. They did not support the America First Committee and isolationism. They were for the defeat and overthrow of Hitlerism. They operated under the terribly mistaken belief that the bourgeois democratic regimes could not be trusted to defeat Hitler. What the Workers party advocated was the formation of labor governments that would arm the workers and carry out a transitional program leading to basic changes in the structure of the society. This position may seem unbelievable to us in 1983, when the United States has emerged as the principal barrier to the Stalinist domination of the world.

Miss Decter furthermore says that the Trotskyites were "in effect in a coalition with the isolationists and reactionaries of America First." I suppose that if viewed in one way this may seem to be true. That, however, does not tell us the entire story. In politics similar positions are acquired for many different reasons. For example, Miss Decter opposes forced busing and racial quotas. So do the Ku Klux Klan and other racists. Does that mean that she is in effect in a coalition with the KKK and racists? Norman Podhoretz and other contributors to COMMENTARY opposed the Vietnam war. Apparently the Communist party, the New Left, and other groups also opposed the war. Does that mean that COMMENTARY was in a coalition with the CP and other totalitarian movements in the world?

I agree with Miss Decter's comments on Howe's position of opposition to the Vietnam war. Howe seems not to have learned from our mistakes in World War II. He agonizes a great deal about what befell the people of Vietnam but at the time all he had to say in justification of his position was that the South Vietnam regime was a corrupt dictatorship which did not meet his high moral standards. The fact that the people of South Vietnam enjoyed many democratic rights and had many democratic institutions was a matter of indifference to him....

IRVING PANKEN

New York City

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Midge Decter is correct when she states that World War II was more than an inter-imperialist war. The fight against Nazi totalitarianism overshadowed that dimension by far. The race to build a nuclear bomb, begun forty years ago, underscores what was at stake for Jews and the world. Imagine what would have been our fate if Hitler had won that nuclear race and succeeded

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in building a Hiroshima-like bomb before the United States did.

However, Miss Decter is wrong when she explains the anti-war formulas of the socialist Left as being the result of initial indifference as to who won the war. The Trotskyites were intellectual prisoners of their World War I anti-war traditions and of Lenin's programs. In being influenced by the experiences of World War I to adopt a formal anti-war stance, they were not alone.

Miss Decter should have mentioned that the strong anti-war movement in the United States before World War II was led, by and large, by men of the Right—by Republican isolationists and by America-First figures like Charles Lindbergh. The conservative of those days was a different kind of animal from today's neoconservative. This should temper the hubris of some who think that the still much needed adoption of an aggressive democratic political and military policy against Stalinist totalitarianism depends upon, or is facilitated by, support of capitalism and conservatism. Advocacy of an egalitarian and free democratic society (socialism) is compatible with being what Herman Kahn called "an aggressive democrat."

F. DAVIDSON

New York City

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Midge Decter characterizes the public forum *Dissent* organized on Hannah Arendt's *Eichmann in Jerusalem* as a "lynching" and she deplores Irving Howe's lack of "intellectual manners" in "gathering a mob" against a book. Proper "literary controversy" required that he take pen in hand. As a participant in that debate I find the charge puzzling. A lynching presupposes a helpless victim beset by a frenzied mob. Hannah Arendt, a formidable figure whose accusations about Jewish behavior during the Holocaust enjoyed maximum publicity in a series of articles in the *New Yorker,* hardly qualifies as a defenseless lamb. My fellow panelists were Raul Hilberg, Lionel Abel, and Daniel Bell, the only individuals gathered by Howe; Hannah Arendt had not accepted an invitation to participate. Was this panel the mob? If the designation applies to the audience Howe could hardly be held responsible for its unpredictable reactions. In any case, the audience included well-known supporters of Hannah Arendt, nor did the emotional intensity of some present affect the caliber or intellectual rigor of the several presentations both for and against Miss Arendt's thesis.

Symposiums, even when impassioned, are accepted forms of intellectual controversy. We were not engaged in a "literary controversy" about a book, as Miss Decter would have it, but in an examination of judgments about Jewish guilt already widely disseminated in a major magazine. Certainly those of us who for years had waged an isolated struggle to bring awareness of the Jewish catastrophe to an indifferent public were grateful to Irving Howe for involving, even if belatedly, a previously aloof sector of the Jewish intelligentsia in a confrontation on the Holocaust. For this reason I comment on what I consider a misrepresentation of an occasion that marked a turning point in this indifference. Miss Decter ascribes Howe's deficiency in literary decorum to the Trotskyite training of his student days. Presumably had he emerged from the radical activism of his youth as a neoconservative instead of as a democratic socialist, his intellectual manners would have improved. The petty *ad hominem* jabs in Miss Decter's article hardly offer an object lesson in the decencies she recommends.

MARIE SYRKIN

Santa Monica, California

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Midge Decter's description of the symposium on *Eichmann in Jerusalem* calls for correction. I was a participant in that meeting chaired by Irving Howe and can testify that, though passionate, it was fairly conducted and far from a "lynching." Speakers agreeing with Hannah Arendt's thesis equaled those against, . . . and none of those favoring her approach were prevented from presenting their arguments nor were they blocked by interruptions. Most of the critics of the book dealt substantively with points made by Miss Arendt and did not engage in *ad hominem* arguments against her.

I have attended many symposi-

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ums on books and fail to understand why the fair and well-balanced one arranged by Irving Howe should now be characterized as "public brutality." I think Miss Decter owes Howe an apology for this one. To me, it seems that she is guilty of the very polemical hurtfulness that she attributes to Howe.

EPHRAIM FRIEND
Flushing, New York

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

In addition to the examples given by Midge Decter, Irving Howe's irresponsible and destructive moralism is starkly revealed in his essay on pornography in the Spring 1978 *Dissent*. To be sure, he abhors the phenomenon, but he also reveals much about his own views and values:

> So I walk along 42nd Street, and seeing what one sees, I remember Trotsky's expectation at the end of his book, *Literature and Revolution*, that mankind would yet rise to the levels of Goethe . . . and Marx . . . but . . . the sheer moral ugliness of the porn scene . . . —how can that be reconciled with social hopes? I find 42nd Street more destructive of my morale as a socialist than all the neoconservative polemics of the last 30 years.

Clearly revealing his values, Howe nevertheless opposes censorship. Normally Howe is obsessively opposed to capitalism, but his fear of totalitarianism in America is so great that he goes along with unrestrained license for the entrepreneurs of smut. Howe's long-time difficulty is that he latches onto a moral position and defends it regardless of the destruction it might leave behind.

MARVIN MAURER
Monmouth College
West Long Branch, New Jersey

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

One shudders at the thought of how Midge Decter would have treated Irving Howe had he confessed in *A Margin of Hope* to a teen-age dalliance with the Communist party or had he not in the 60's become one of the earliest critics of the New Left, well before COMMENTARY, in fact. Since she finds no such smoking pistols in the record, she is reduced to complaining that he fails to tell us he has been married more than once and that the journal he founded and still edits has always been "boring" (although until six or seven years ago *Dissent* shared many contributors with COMMENTARY—*pace* Woody Allen's crack in *Annie Hall*—and still shares the odd one or two).

Some other counts in Miss Decter's bill of indictment: the world of Howe's fathers included "virtually no synagogues, no yeshivahs, no rabbis . . . certainly no Republicans" and (why "above all"?) "no Zionists." What Howe might have done about these lamentable deficiencies is not clear except that he should not, presumably, have elected to write about so narrow an early experience of life even if, as Miss Decter concedes, it was common to many children of Jewish immigrants. Howe spent more time arguing radical politics than attending class at City College. Although he served in the U.S. Army for over two years, entering it before the Holocaust was under way and long before the "terrible secret" was known, he does not feel as guilty as he ought for having once belonged to a Trotskyist splinter party that opposed American participation in World War II, despite his admission to doubts all along about this sectarian policy. Miss Decter makes a few more criticisms in the same vein.

Her major objection to Howe's present views is that his politics and *Dissent*'s have no content except to attack the neoconservatives for abandoning "the Left." But *A Margin of Hope* contains no polemics against neoconservatism; there are only a few passing references to it, most of them, like the one Miss Decter cites, inferential. As for *Dissent*, the neoconservatives have indeed not gone unnoticed in its pages: nearly a decade ago Joseph Epstein attacked them, singling out COMMENTARY, as "intellectuals in retreat," but Epstein has since decided to retreat himself and become a COMMENTARY regular. There have been a few more recent critical pieces—the neoconservatives have, after all, won a certain notoriety—but my impression, as an editor and frequent contributor, is that most writers for *Dissent* are just not terribly bothered about nor interested in why Midge Decter, Michael Novak, *et al.* have learned to love "capitalism" after previously thinking of themselves as its critics, certainly not the many foreign intellectuals the magazine has always printed. Apart from support for liberal democracy, and a broadly social-democratic disposition to regard liberty and equality as often entailing one another (without denying that they may also come into conflict), *Dissent* articles exhibit, as Epstein once noted, no coherent ideological tendency. Miss Decter may have a beam and mote problem here, for COMMENTARY's unflagging zeal to expose "the Left" dominates even its movie reviews.

Miss Decter quotes Howe on his experience with the New Left: "I felt that some of [its] spokesmen wanted not just to refute my opinions . . . but also to erase, to eliminate, to 'smash' people like me." The main trouble with the neoconservatives is not that their opinions and values are so offensive but that one senses the same impulse underlying their ceaseless diatribes against "the Left." An unmistakable heresy-hunting note is sounded in Miss Decter's fault-finding scrutiny of *A Margin of Hope*, especially when she calls Howe "irresponsible" and a beneficiary of freedom who really —"objectively," as it were—is its enemy. COMMENTARY's ideological animus has in recent years widened to include people like Howe and even Daniel Bell, the New York *Times*, and ordinary liberal Democrats now that the New Left of the 60's has been moribund for so long. Not that the assault on the latter was always properly adjusted to its target: there was little of Irving Howe's wit and sense of proportion (also confidence in American democracy) as displayed in his riposte to a radical student harassing him that the young man's destiny was to become a dentist. The neoconservatives would probably have fumed that he reminded them of an SS man or a Red Guard.

I am not suggesting that the neoconservatives are a threat to freedom, pained though they profess to be by those who inevitably and altogether legitimately exercise it in ways they dislike. Nor are they likely to succeed in morally and intellectually discrediting criticism of existing institutions that is continuous with the social-democratic and socialist traditions which have, even in America, reformed and regulated the capitalism Miss Decter now considers the bastion of our liberties. At most, neoconservatism may marginally increase the chances of yet another outbreak of the infantile leftism that erupted in the 60's after the indiscriminate delegitimation of the Left in the previous decade. At the very least, its monomania makes it as wearisomely predictable as the

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doctrinaire and sentimental Left against which it discharges so much energy.

If footnotes were customary in a letter, I would prefer to use them, as Miss Decter did, to comment on two factual issues she raises. *Dissent* began publication in 1954, not 1953, and if Joseph McCarthy "by 1954 had been destroyed," it was not until December of that year after the Senate censured him. According to the Gallup poll, McCarthy did not win the support of 50 percent of the American public until late 1953 and early 1954, which helped arouse the Eisenhower administration to launch the famous Army-McCarthy hearings that began in late April of 1954. Far from "conducting a post-mortem," the first three issues of *Dissent* ran brief comments when he was at the peak of his influence (though, as Howe remarks, this took no special courage). The autumn issue, the fourth, included a full-length article on McCarthy of which I was the author, written in the summer, before the censure motion had been introduced; the opening sentence read, nevertheless, "There are signs that Senator McCarthy is slipping." The article, incidentally, criticized both the narrow terms of opposition to McCarthy in a book by James Rorty and Moshe Decter sponsored by the American Committee for Cultural Freedom and the view Midge Decter rejects that the Senator was, in her words, "the harbinger of a coming American fascism."

Miss Decter's account of the 1963 *Dissent* forum on Hannah Arendt's book on Eichmann, which she dates a year too late, is at variance with the facts, as given by Howe in *A Margin of Hope* and more fully in *Dissent* (Summer 1982, pp. 382-83) where he corrects Elizabeth Young-Bruehl's inaccurate report on the event in her biography of Arendt. (I write as one who was present and felt more sympathetic to Arendt than either Irving Howe or Midge Decter.)

DENNIS H. WRONG
Princeton, New Jersey

MIDGE DECTER writes:

I am grateful to Irving Panken for laying out so clearly and so vividly the Trotskyite position on World War II. He makes too much, of course, of my fairly offhand remark that in opposing American participation in World War II, Irving Howe and his comrades were in effect in a coalition with the America Firsters (though the record of their one-time leader, Norman Thomas, could be considered at least cloudy on this point). The analogy with opponents of busing and the Ku Klux Klan does not in any case hold: busing was supposed to be a technique, not an end, and the liberal critics of busing opposed it on that basis. The analogy with the opponents of the Vietnam war comes a little closer. We did find ourselves in effect in a coalition with the lovers of Hanoi, and it became a source of great, and permanent, anguish to us.

But the essential point of difference between us—and it goes to the very heart of my analysis of Irving Howe's political history—is the meaning of "third campism." When an issue is one of life and death, I said, there is no such thing as "critical support." There is only support, or failure to support. Nothing makes my point more clearly than Mr. Panken's own clarification of the third-camp position. The bourgeois democracies could not, in his words, "be trusted" to defeat Hitler; therefore the program was—and one wonders that Mr. Panken can even now say so without astonishment—to arm the workers! This position not only seems unbelievable in 1983, it should have seemed unbelievable in 1942. That it did not was precisely the kind of political pathology I was among other things trying to explain. The workers, after all, *were* being armed. The British workers were. The German workers were. All the workers were. How was it that Trotskyites could pretend to be unaware of that fact? The kindest answer I can muster is that they elected to absent themselves from the real world where real and consequential choices were—to what should be our collective and undying gratitude—being made.

F. DAVIDSON is, of course, correct in saying that many leftist opponents of American intervention were prisoners of their World War I anti-war traditions. But what has he said when he has said that? The notion of arming the workers against all their respective governments was also a World War I "tradition"—a tradition whose only effect on the real world, if it could be said to have had one, culminated in Bolshevik domination of Russia. The question is how such traditions could have prevailed in the face of the reality of Nazi Germany. It is a more terrible and a more fateful question—fateful even for our own day—than Mr. Davidson's formulation seems to account for. I would have been happy to take up the subject of right-wing isolationism, which, as we know, was not in every instance without the taint of pro-Nazism, had that been the subject of my piece. But it was not. It should be possible to offer a critique of a certain kind of socialist thinking, even in today's climate, without having to sign an oath of even-handedness, however irrelevant. But since the problem has been raised, let me say that the Social Democrats U.S.A. are certainly "aggressive democrats." And I would certainly feel more reassured about the prospects for socialism if their socialist virtue were not forever being impugned by fellow-socialists like Irving Howe.

AS FOR Marie Syrkin and Ephraim Friend, I can only suppose that their memory of the meeting about *Eichmann in Jerusalem* has been colored by the appalling decline in standards of public discussion that we all subsequently learned to accustom ourselves to. Compared with gatherings, particularly on university campuses, that came after—in which hissing and shouting and other forms of interdicting serious discussion became (and to some extent remain) standard behavior—I concede that one might say that meeting was "fairly conducted." I have a different memory of the atmosphere on that night: it was seething. Raul Hilberg, for instance, was interrupted from the reading of his paper by the pounding on the table of a fellow panelist; members of the audience shouted; and Irving Howe, who was the chairman of the evening, was, to say the least, complaisant. Perhaps things got better later. I walked out, disturbed by a tone of discussion I did not yet know was soon to become one of the chiefest shames of American so-called intellectual life. It was a shame from which those of us who learned to live with being shouted down in place of argument, very much including Irving Howe himself, have not yet totally recovered.

AND finally, alas, what is one to make of Dennis H. Wrong? He is clearly very angry with me, which is any reader's right. But his anger seems to have rendered him—normally a serious and highly literate person—quite incapable of reading.

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The Chromium Mechanism

The first comprehensive explanation of electrochemical activity during the plating of chromium has recently been formulated at the General Motors Research Laboratories. This understanding has aided in transforming chromium plating into a highly efficient, high-speed operation.

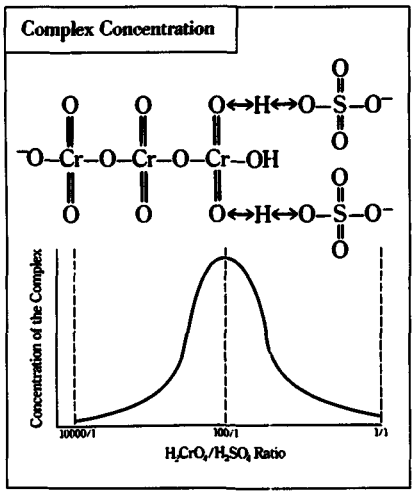
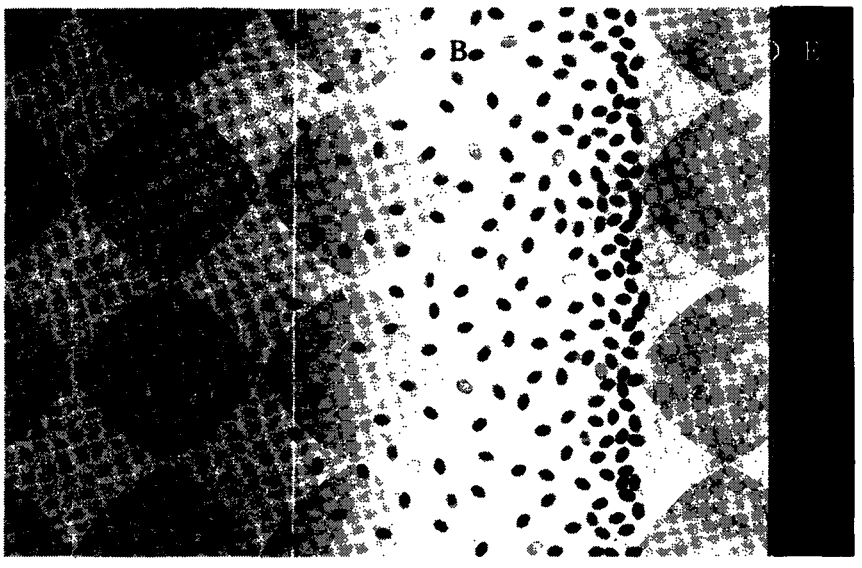


Figure 1: The electroactive complex and a theoretical plot of its concentration as a function of chromic acid to sulfuric acid ratio.

Figure 2: The electroactive complex diffuses from the bulk electrolyte solution (A) through the diffusion layer (B) to the Helmholtz double layer (C) to be discharged as metallic chromium (D) on the cathode (E) surface.



FOR MANY industrial applications, chromium coatings of more than 0.2 mil thickness are required for wear and corrosion resistance. But the conventional method of plating chromium is neither fast nor efficient. Nor, until the recent work of a GM researcher, had the steps involved in the century-old plating process been explained in detail. Through a combination of theory and experiment, Dr. James Hoare has devised the first comprehensive mechanism for chromium plating. This increased understanding has helped electrochemists at the General Motors Research Laboratories develop a system that plates chromium sixty times faster than the conventional method, while improving energy-efficiency by a factor of three.

The electrolyte for plating is a chromic acid solution which contains various chromate ions: chromate, dichromate and trichromate. From a series of steady-state polarization experiments, Dr. Hoare concluded that trichromate is the ion important in chromium deposition.

Sulfuric acid has been recognized as essential to chromium plating and has been assumed by some to be a catalyst for the process. In this strongly acidic solution, sulfate should be mostly present as the bisulfate ion $(HSO_4)^-$. Dr. Hoare found, contrary to expectations, that the addition of sulfuric acid to the plating bath decreased the conductivity of the solution.

Combining these findings with the results of previous investigations, Dr. Hoare concluded that the electroactive species was a trichromate-bisulfate complex (see Figure 1). From equilibrium considerations, he theorized that the maximum concentration of this species occurred at a 100-to-1 chromic acid/sulfuric acid ratio. The observation that the maximum rate of chromium deposition also occurred at this ratio supports the conclusion that this trichromate-bisulfate complex is the electroactive species.

During the plating process, the complex diffuses from the bulk solution toward the cathode (see Figure 2). Electron transport takes place by quantum mechanical tunneling through the potential energy barrier of the Helmholtz double layer and the unprotected chromium in the complex (Cr atom

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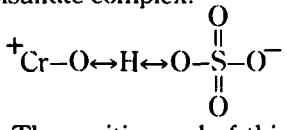
on the left in Figure 1) loses electons by successive steps, going from Cr^{+6} to Cr^{+2}. Decomposition of the resulting chromous dichromate complex takes place by acid hydrolysis to form a chromous-oxybisulfate complex:



The positive end of this complex is adsorbed onto the cathode surface. Electrons are transferred from the cathode to the adsorbed chromium ion, forming metallic chromium and regenerating the $(HSO_4)^-$ ion. Thus, Dr. Hoare's mechanism explains how sulfuric acid, in the form of the bisulfate ion, participates in the plating process.

IT HAS long been known that chromium cannot be plated from a solution when initially present as Cr^{+3} because of the formation of the stable aquo complex, $[Cr(H_2O)_6]^{+3}$. Yet chromium can be plated when initially present as Cr^{+6} even though it must pass through the Cr^{+3} state before being deposited. Dr. Hoare's mechanism handles this paradox by explaining that the chromium ion being deposited (on the left in Figure 1) is protected by the rest of the complex as it passes through the Cr^{+3} state, so that the stable aquo complex cannot form.

The diffusion of the electroactive complex apparently controls the rate of the process, so that shortening the diffusion path increases the speed of chromium deposition. A high rate of relative motion between the electrolyte and the cathode will shorten the path. This can be accomplished by rapid flow or by agitation of the electrolyte.

Dr. Hoare found that the rate of chromium deposition increased with electrolyte flow until the process was no longer diffusion-controlled. He also found that the use of dilute electrolyte significantly increased plating efficiency.

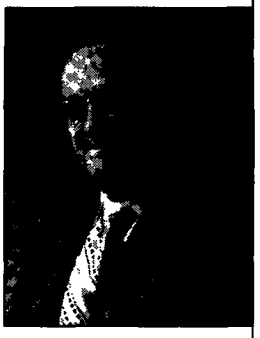
"This project is an excellent example," says Dr. Hoare, "of how basic research and engineering principles can be combined to develop a new, successful process. Now, we'd like to take on the challenge of plating successfully from Cr^{+3}, which would be an even more efficient way to provide corrosion and wear resistance."

General Motors

GM

MARK OF EXCELLENCE

THE MAN BEHIND THE WORK



Dr. James Hoare is a Research Fellow at the General Motors Research Laboratories. He is a member of the Electrochemistry Department.

Dr. Hoare served as an electronics technician in the U.S. Navy during the Second World War. In 1949, he received his Ph.D. in physical chemistry from the Catholic University of America. After an assistant professorship at Trinity College in Washington, D.C., he joined the US Naval Research Laboratory as a physical chemist. He became a staff member at General Motors in 1960.

Dr. Hoare's sustaining interest has been in electrochemical kinetics and the mechanisms of electrode processes. He is best known to the scientific community for his basic studies of hydrogen and oxygen electrode mechanisms. His book, *The Electrochemistry of Oxygen*, published in 1968, is considered a work of primary importance to the field. In addition to his work on chromium plating, he is responsible for the fundamental research that helped make electrochemical machining a precision process.

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Not one single thing he says about what I wrote is even faintly sensible, let alone accurate.

I did not, for example, say that the world in which Irving Howe grew up contained "no synagogues, no yeshivahs, no rabbis, etc." On the contrary, I said that his *account* of that world in *World of Our Fathers* was distorted, politically and culturally selective, and therefore false—to his *own* experience as well as to historical reality. Nor did I say that Howe does not feel as guilty as he ought to for having opposed American intervention in World War II. I said, once again, exactly the opposite. With defenders like Dennis Wrong, Irving Howe is in the soup.

The real source of Mr. Wrong's loss of control, however, seems to be not what I said about Irving Howe but what I said about *Dissent*. Essentially he takes me to task for saying that *Dissent*'s current "animating ethic," along with Irving Howe's, has little real content beyond a posture of hostility to those who refuse to share its particular brand of uncritical utopianism. But in the very act of doing so—rarely is an author so lucky in a critic—he manages to confirm my point.

That *Dissent* has paid no more than ordinary attention to the "neoconservatives" is a claim about which, as Oscar Wilde remarked about the death of Little Nell, it would take a heart of stone not to laugh out loud. Mr. Wrong's "impression, as an editor and frequent contributor" would be well served by even a casual perusal of back issues. There is no space here to list references, and it would be too boring and tedious to do so. But citing Joseph Epstein from long ago is just a trifle less than honest—or perhaps Mr. Wrong does not read the magazine of which he is an editor and frequent contributor—in view of the fact that in the spring of 1981 alone some twenty-one pages of the magazine were devoted to an essay on COMMENTARY written with intent to kill. Evidence for this intent, if any further evidence beyond the piece itself were necessary, is to be found in the fact that *Dissent*'s editor, in an act possibly unprecedented in the history of magazines, offered the piece for simultaneous publication to another magazine—clearly to maximize its distribution. Greater selflessness for the sake of a larger aim hath no editor. Moreover, in that same issue was another article devoted to a piece of my own that had appeared in COMMENTARY. I mention these examples (the list could go on and on) to suggest that if writers for *Dissent* are just not terribly bothered about or interested in the neoconservative attitudes to capitalism and related issues, they have had a curious way of showing it. And Mr. Wrong has a curious way of describing reality.

Above all, he confirms me by offering exactly the kind of "argument" I said had become the main content of his kind of socialism: namely, *tu quoque*. Rather than describe what *is* the gravamen of his kind of criticism of existing institutions in answer to my charge that it is merely a pious and righteous posture, he says that I and people like me are contributing to yet another outbreak of infantile leftism. His warrant for this observation lies in nothing more than an implied assertion that he is good and I am bad. Hardly a distinguished social, or even socialist, analysis.

As for his "footnote" on the relative historical dating of *Dissent* and the demise of McCarthy, I congratulate Mr. Wrong for having seen, a few months before the Senate vote of censure, that McCarthy was "slipping" but fail to see the relevance to the point I was making: namely, that Irving Howe's disappointment with all other intellectuals on the issue of McCarthy and his satisfaction at the record of *Dissent* were both misplaced—in the former case by neglecting the truth and in the latter, by neglecting to mention that *Dissent* commenced publication *after* the opposition to McCarthy had started to take real effect. In pointing out that *Dissent* began publication in 1954 rather than 1953 (I took the date from Howe's book), Mr. Wrong is again only strengthening my point.

Whether or not freedom depends on capitalism and whether there is anything left of socialism would seem to be serious questions, worthy of serious discussion. In writing the way he has, I am afraid that Mr. Wrong has just betrayed his own answers to them.

Afghanistan

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

We read with great interest Michael Barry's article, "Afghanistan—Another Cambodia?" [August 1982]. Indeed, the article describes the exact situation which prevails under the Communist regime in Afghanistan, and which continues unchanged to this day. Three members of our organization, myself, Dr. Fahrang, professor at Kabul University, and Dr. Hokoki, former judge of the supreme court, underwent barbaric tortures at the hands of the Communists similar to those Mr. Barry describes.

We admire your attempt to disclose Soviet crimes in our country.

G. NIAZ
Organization for Strengthening
of Unity and Struggle for the
Liberation of Afghanistan
Bonn, West Germany

Latin America

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

A great deal is written on Latin American politics; very little of it, unfortunately, is balanced, sensible, and humane. Max Singer's "The Record In Latin America" [December 1982] is all of these things. It is a superb piece, and it will raise substantially the quality of the debate, long ongoing, on how the United States can best apply its efforts to reducing poverty and increasing freedom in that region of the world.

NICK EBERSTADT
Harvard University
Center for Population Studies
Cambridge, Massachusetts

Burdens, Shoulders, and President Carter

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Lucy S. Dawidowicz [Letters from Readers, September 1982] says that President Carter was mistaken when he quoted a Yiddish proverb, "God gives burdens, also shoulders," in his concession speech to Ronald Reagan. According to her, "There was and is no such proverb." Tsk, tsk, Mrs. Dawidowicz! If not a kosher proverb in the strict sense, President Carter's Yiddish reference certainly came from good Jewish sources: "Gimpel the Fool," Isaac Bashevis Singer's creation via Saul Bellow's translation. Shortly after his ill-fated marriage to the town harlot, Gimpel says, "God gives burdens, also shoulders."

I wouldn't be at all surprised to learn that President Carter, an avid reader, personally came upon that phrase while reading Singer.

RUTH V. H. LACK
Houston, Texas

LUCY S. DAWIDOWICZ writes:

Ruth V. H. Lack's phenomenal memory deserves to be rewarded. I wish I could say that she had indeed found the true source for President

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Carter's putative Yiddish proverb. But, alas, however close she came, it's not the real thing. (In Saul Bellow's translation of Singer's Yiddish, Gimpel says: "Shoulders are from God and burdens too." Singer's Yiddish text diverged even further from Carter's version.) I'm sorry Miss Lack isn't right, not only because I appreciate her attentiveness as a reader, but also out of sheer malice. What fun it would have been to speculate on the notion that Jimmy Carter, in his sanctimonious self-pity at having lost the election, identified with Gimpel the Fool.

I never intended to track down the source of this bastard proverb, but it turned out that the mystery of its origins and its presidential association had aroused international curiosity. The Yiddishists in Israel were intrigued. Apparently having no more pressing business, a journalist for *Maariv*, Israel's largest daily newspaper, pursued the search. His detective work paid off. In a column published on November 21, 1980, he disclosed that the proverb came from a collection called *Quotations of Wit and Wisdom*, put together by John W. Gardner and Francesca Gardner Reese (Norton paperback, 1975; p. 91). The Gardners erroneously identified it as a Yiddish proverb, which it is not. But how were President Carter's speechwriters to know that it was in fact a German proverb? And consequently, dear Miss Lack, definitely not kosher.

Fractured French

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Moi, j'accuse, aussi. For yet another article at a level of excellence which one has come to take for granted from him, Norman Podhoretz greatly deserves our *applaudissements*, but William Bowen of *Fortune* [Letters from Readers, December 1982], who writes *j'applaude*, deserves our *sifflements* for making *applaudir* first conjugation since it belongs to the second—*donc, j'applaudis* not *j'applaude*.

ROBERT TRATTNER
Baltimore, Maryland

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

COMMENTARY and I are both guilty of fracturing French. I wrote *j'applauds* and COMMENTARY amended that to *j'applaude*. The correct form —as many other readers, no doubt, will also tell you—is *j'applaudis*.

WILLIAM BOWEN
New York City

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"ENVER HOXHA has won a stunning re-election victory in his bid to remain dictator of Albania. The vote was 1,627,959 for, one against. Actually nine votes were cast against Hoxha, but eight of them were ruled invalid. The Albanian news agency also reports that opposition leader Mehmet Shehu resorted to the 'shameful alternative of suicide'. Look for a unanimous vote next time."

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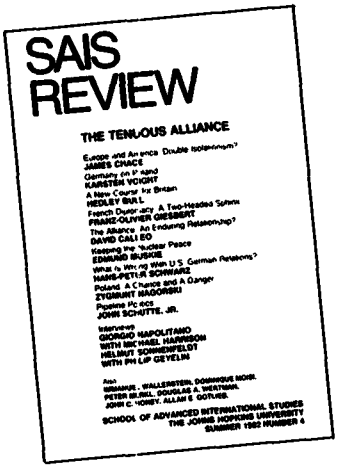

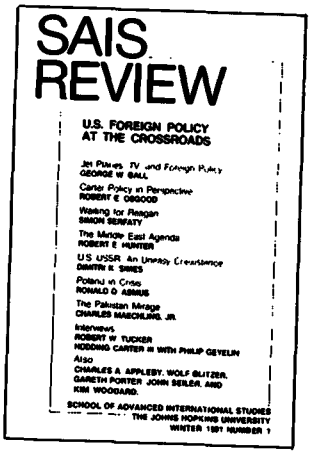

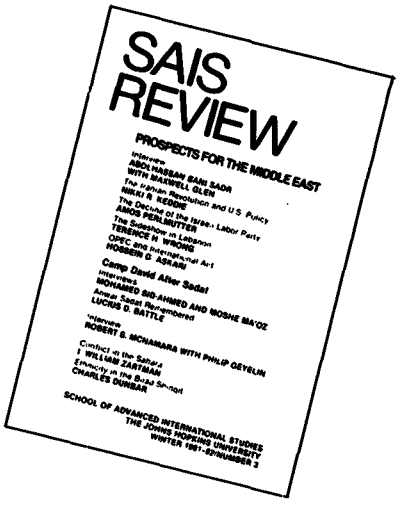

IN THE CURRENT ISSUE OF THE SAIS REVIEW:

—Opposing views on the Lebanon war: Whose victory?

Norman Podhoretz: "The Palestinians have more cultural freedom living under Israeli military occupation, not to mention in Israel itself, than they or indeed any other Arabs enjoy anywhere else in the Arab world."

Richard Falk: "The massacres themselves were only extensions of an underlying Israeli policy."

—**Chester Crocker,** assistant secretary of state for African affairs, discusses Reagan's Africa policy.

—**Colin S. Gray** writes on the Reagan administration's nuclear strategy, "a regrettable necessity."

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What We Know About the Soviet Union

Walter Laqueur

THE present transition period in Moscow, the third in three decades, has left Western observers more uncertain than its two predecessors. Both in 1953, after the death of Stalin, and in 1964, after the ouster of Khrushchev, Washington read the signs from Moscow more or less correctly, even though there were fewer guideposts in those days and Soviet policy was then shrouded in greater secrecy. By contrast, Secretary of State George Shultz recently said that the experts on the Soviet Union apparently did not know any more than he did about what was going to happen in Moscow.

One could see what he meant. Some experts were telling us that there was now a unique opportunity for rapprochement and reconciliation which, if allowed to slip, would never recur. Others were saying that we were on the eve of momentous changes, either because the Soviet Union had made so much progress, or on the contrary because it was facing such terrible difficulties. Many argued that the Soviet Union was a colossus with feet of clay which might collapse at almost any moment; these, more often than not, were opponents of defense spending.

The nonexpert, confronted with all these differences, was bound to reach Shultz's conclusion. It seemed an obvious conclusion, and it was quite wrong.

WHAT *do* we know about the Soviet Union? Three decades ago the interpretation of Soviet policies was largely the preserve of old Mensheviks, former Trotskyites, former Communists, or at least fellow-travelers—people steeped in Marxism-Leninism who had over many years closely followed the development of Soviet and world Communism. They did not necessarily agree with one another, nor were they always right. But they had acquired an intuitive understanding which helped them grasp the essentials of developments inside the Soviet Union, of Stalin's motives and those of his disciples, and to guess how they were likely to react. These older experts obviously had axes to grind, and they were often heavily biased. But their prejudices, far from being an impediment, actually sharpened their perceptions, just as Burke's bias had helped him in 1790 to predict the future of the French Revolution more accurately than all the objective and detached students of contemporary France.

The theoretical model on which this generation of "Kremlinologists" relied was totalitarianism, with its emphasis on the inexorable spread and consolidation of state power. But as Stalinism gave way to (partial) de-Stalinization, the old totalitarianism model was (partially) discredited, and a new generation of Soviet experts moved into the front rank of the profession with a new key to the understanding of post-Stalinist Russia: political modernization. True, the theorists (like Karl Deutsch and Gabriel Almond) who inspired this school were not Soviet specialists, but what they said about the "automatic" (or "inevitable") trend in modern society toward pluralism, toward economic and political decentralization, toward the demand not only for consumer goods but also for "spiritual consumer goods"—all this had a considerable impact on the profession of Kremlinology.

It took about a decade to realize (although some do not realize it to this day) that the modernization model was of little help in explaining, and of no assistance in predicting, Soviet political behavior. For however hard one looked for these trends in the Soviet Union under Brezhnev, one simply could not find them there. Thus disappointed with the modernization theory, many political scientists were led to give a second chance to another model—one which emphasized the rules, written and unwritten, of bureaucratic politics. This theory, first formulated around 1960, interpreted the Soviet Union as a giant bureaucracy, subject to the laws governing all bureaucracies, including our own: functional divisions are all-important, institutional interests play a great role, performance and affiliation to a group are more decisive than ideology, legal procedure becomes significant, and passivity is the general result.

On the basis of the bureaucracy model, no less than the modernization theory, one was likely to reach the conclusion that West and East were "con-

WALTER LAQUEUR, a contributing editor of COMMENTARY, is chairman of the Research Council of Georgetown University's Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington, D.C., and the author of numerous books on international affairs.

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verging." But again, the hypothesis could not survive a closer look. In this case, the attempts to find common denominators between the Soviet system and ours have, by and large, turned out to be a waste of time. There are similarities, but they do not concern the essential character of the Soviet regime, in which the Communist party controls the bureaucracy and ideology also plays a role.

Still other Soviet experts concentrated on a comparative approach, more often than not based on quantitative techniques. The basic idea underlying this approach—to vary Kipling, "What do you know of Russia, who only Russia know?"—was perfectly healthy. But it soon emerged that comparisons between the Soviet Union and, say, Poland were of limited validity, and with Albania even more so. In the end inveterate quantifiers were forced to admit that (to use for a moment their professional jargon) once the number of variables —small letter *n*—became too large, the problem was no longer manageable.

SOME Sovietologists also developed a sudden interest in cognitive psychology, a profession which had not been too successful in sorting out its own problems, but which was believed to contain the clue to many of the riddles in the field of Soviet studies. This new preoccupation with perception and misperception in foreign politics in general, and specifically in the field of Soviet studies, on the whole had unfortunate consequences. It led to the belief that since we construct the reality in which we operate, the study of our perceptions about reality is as important as the study of reality (if not more so). It implied, in practical terms, that most of the world's major conflicts were caused by wrong inferences drawn from ambiguous evidence. Hence the conclusion that one ought to make a special effort to understand the antagonist's mentality and perspectives.

As applied to the Soviet-American conflict in particular, cognitive psychology taught that Russians and Americans, despite their different mentalities, were closer than generally believed: their common interests outweighed their divisions. Indeed, but for the fact that the hard-liners on both sides had constituted an "objective alliance" validating each others' expectations (invariably of the worst-case type), they would be even closer.

This mixture of the obvious and the nonsensical was bound to have a more harmful effect in America than in almost any other country. For nowhere has there been so little understanding of how a dictatorship works or so little appreciation of the importance of ideology (or religion or nationalism) in politics. In no other country has there been so much good will—which is to say willingness to ignore or at least belittle the existence of genuine conflicts among nations, ideologies, and political systems. Americans have always been reluctant to admit that certain conflicts are fundamental and irreconcilable. This reluctance was now given scientific standing. What had begun as sensible, if somewhat obvious, advice—that in politics as in private life one should always try to understand the other fellow's view—led to the assumption, "scientifically" formulated, that if only the viewpoint of the other side were better understood, most conflicts could be resolved or avoided.

There can be no doubt that behind the rise of these new approaches was a revolt against an "outdated cold-war mentality," against an American policy which, motivated by "blind anti-Communism," had led the country into Vietnam. But it is also true that many members of this third generation of Soviet experts were genuinely intrigued by the new "scientific" approaches which promised to put the study of Soviet affairs on a secure, objective basis, far in advance of the subjective, instinctive, prejudiced ("folkloristic") approach of the early Sovietologists.

This was one side of the coin, but there was, as usual, another. The new Sovietologists no longer had that instinctive empathy for Soviet policy which the Mensheviks and the ex-Communists had possessed. As academic scholars who had never been active in politics, moreover, they lacked a sense of power, and their interest in ideology was also limited. In fact, their heavy preoccupation with methodology sometimes left them only limited time to follow events in the real world.

Nevertheless their ideas, suitably simplified, found their way into the media: that far-reaching changes were about to take place in the Soviet Union with the rise of a young, more liberal generation; that the rise of these forces was in the best interest of America and world peace; and that it was the chief task of U.S. foreign policy to support Soviet doves against the Kremlin hawks.

EVEN more important than the academic Sovietologists in shaping the image of the Soviet Union both among the intelligentsia and in the media has been the work of George F. Kennan. In his most recent book, *The Nuclear Delusion,** Kennan expresses the belief that he has failed to influence the public. But in fact he has been more influential than any other single writer on Soviet affairs. Kennan's influence is partly due to his background as a scholar-diplomat and partly to the fact that he writes in a language which is always intelligible and at times powerful.

To Kennan the seemingly inexorable advance of what he calls anti-Soviet hysteria in America is more sinister than mere intellectual error; it derives, he believes, from an unconscious need for an external enemy. It is simply not true, he says, that, like the Nazis, the Soviets have intensive and relentless plans for military conquest in every direction. In fact, they never even wanted to invade Western

* Pantheon, 207 pp., $13.95.

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Europe. Nor, according to Kennan, is it true that the Kremlin might be inclined to resort to war as a means of resolving its internal difficulties. Those who speak of Soviet adventurism and Finlandization, he asserts, mistake Moscow's concern for military security, its obsession with secrecy, and its quest for prestige and influence for something more ambitious and wicked.

Now, it is a little irritating to read about "anti-Soviet hysteria" and about the psychological need for an external enemy just when all the papers and the television stations are competing with one another to find attractive traits of character in Messrs. Andropov, Aliev, and other KGB stalwarts; at the very time when most Americans seem to agree that the defense budget should be cut; and when President Reagan is offering the Russians more grain than they actually want to buy. But Kennan does have some good points, I believe, in what he says about the militarization of American policy. There *has* been a tendency in U.S. foreign policy since World War II to interpret the Soviet danger mainly in military terms and to give absolute priority to strategic answers. It has always been either peace or war, with little in between. Early on during the Carter Presidency, for example, it was decided that the conflict was more or less over and done with. When it appeared that this was premature, there was the usual fallback on a strategic build-up. Such a build-up might have been overdue in any case, but how could it affect the activities of the Cubans and the East Germans in the Third World?

Kennan is right: the main danger since World War II has not been a Soviet military invasion of Western Europe. But this is because the West decided not to lead the Russians into temptation by creating a power vacuum and created NATO instead. No such effective answer has been found, however, to deal with the real challenge of Soviet foreign policy, which has amounted to war by other means: secret diplomacy, propaganda, covert action, subversion, the use of proxy forces, and so on.

Yet neither is there an answer to any of this in Kennan's book. Indeed, as he sees it, such activities are anyway unrewarding, and if the Soviet Union is foolish enough to continue putting pressure on small countries, it will be frustrated by the forces of nationalism. Unfortunately the record in countries as diverse as Vietnam, Cuba, Yemen, and Angola fails to bear him out on this point.

Nor does the record bear him out on the issue of Soviet nuclear strategy. Kennan, like Robert McNamara and many others, argued for years that the Soviet leaders would not be so stupid as to go beyond parity or equivalence in building up their nuclear arsenal, and in any case could not afford to do so. One sincerely wishes these analysts had been right, but they were not. On this point, it was Richard Pipes and his colleagues in the Committee on the Present Danger who were right in insisting that the Soviets were driving toward nuclear superiority. On the other hand, Pipes was wrong in claiming that the purpose was to fight and win a nuclear war.* As Adam Ulam writes in his new book, *Dangerous Relations: The Soviet Union in World Politics, 1970-1982*:†

> Were Brezhnev and his colleagues to speak frankly when asked why they were seeking a margin of nuclear superiority and honing up their civil defenses if they were not planning to start a war, they would have answered that the reasons were obvious: it was of good practical and psychological importance to the regime.

Richard Lowenthal put it even more explicitly three years ago:

> With all respect to [Richard] Pipes, I do not regard morale-building Red Army literature that such a war could be "won" as evidence that the present Soviet leaders believe in a holocaust as a means of policy. . . . The real political purpose of a Soviet effort for nuclear superiority is clearly to deprive the threat of American nuclear retaliation against a conventional Soviet attack of all credibility—a goal the Soviets have long pursued by many other means, such as their propaganda for an agreement against "first use" of nuclear weapons. Nuclear superiority would thus be a means to secure the political fronts of Soviet conventional superiority where it exists—be it by conventional military action or by political blackmail.

SOME of Kennan's writings, and those of the new Sovietologists, not to mention much of the material published under their influence in the media, have been a matter of great bewilderment to the emigrants from the Soviet Union. Both intellectuals like Solzhenitsyn and the great majority of new arrivals, people from all sections of Soviet society, have reached the conclusion that most Westerners do not have the faintest idea about conditions in the Soviet Union or about the true intentions of the Soviet rulers. A recent (unpublished) field survey shows that of those Soviet émigrés asked, a mere 9 percent think that Americans understand the essence of Soviet foreign policy, only 4 percent think that Americans are familiar with living conditions in the Soviet Union, and over 76 percent grade the competence of U.S. Soviet experts poorly.**

Emigrés, let it be readily admitted, are not always the best judges of their country of origin. They tend to lack detachment, and there is often an element of hyperbole in their comments. In the case of the Russians in particular, some have a ten-

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* See his article, "Why the Soviet Union Thinks It Could Fight & Win a Nuclear War" in the July 1977 COMMENTARY.

† Oxford University Press, 320 pp., $25.00.

** Ilya Levkov, *Patterns of Adaptation and Acculturation of Soviet Jews in the United States*, 1982.

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dency to believe that one has to have spent a few years in the Gulag to understand what the Soviet Union is like. Some of them also tend to exaggerate the importance of their own position in their native land and, consequently, their information about more than a specific sector of Soviet society. Lastly, their knowledge of the world outside the Soviet Union is usually quite limited. They are not in a position to compare, and they fail to see that world politics is not just what the Soviet leaders want to happen but the interplay among various actors on the world stage. Be all that as it may, Soviet émigrés have almost unanimously reached the conclusion that in view of the West's inability to recognize the danger facing it, its chances for survival cannot be rated high.

Some émigrés attribute this to blindness, others to a softening of the brain or backbone. Aleksandr Zinoviev writes in his preface to a new book by Kyrill Henkin* that

> the deepest secrets of social life are usually found on the surface. One has to be totally blind in order not to see the general position of the Soviet Union vis-à-vis the West: by every means to penetrate the West, to use the West for its own ends, to sow disunity, to provoke destabilization, to demoralize, to deceive, to confuse, to threaten, in brief to prepare the West for utter military defeat.

These are blunt and unqualified words, the "terminology of the cold war," and therefore not acceptable in academic (or diplomatic) discussions of Soviet politics. This may be why the recent emigration has had so little impact on the American conception of Soviet affairs, and why on their side the émigrés dismiss the Sovietologists as (at best) "purely academic."

II

WHAT then is the real state of affairs? As Andropov takes over in the Kremlin the domestic situation, while far from rosy, is not remotely as critical as the media would have us believe. To be sure, some of the problems are insoluble within the framework of the Soviet system. But a modern dictatorship has powerful instruments with which to assuage, to suppress protest, to postpone the day of reckoning for a very long time. A sizable part of the population has a vested interest in the perpetuation of the system. The majority, whatever its discontents, is apathetic and incapable of organizing.

Among the acute domestic crises which allegedly are pushing the Soviet empire to the brink of disaster, the economic situation is usually listed in first place. The series of bad harvests is invoked, as are the shortages, the long queues in front of the shops, the stagnating living standards, the decaying infrastructures (transportation, etc.), the great waste, the decreasing productivity, the growing need to support the ailing economies of Eastern Europe, and so on.

All this is true, but politically it is not very significant, certainly not in the short run. The Soviet economy has never functioned well, there have always been shortages and queues, and Soviet citizens have learned to live with them. Even if there have been several bad harvests, enough grain has been imported to provide bread for everyone. (Since the size of the harvest tends to vary cyclically, there is always a chance that the next harvest will be satisfactory, which would be a boost to the regime and a blow to American farmers for whom the misfortunes of Soviet agriculture have become a support system.) The growth rates in Soviet industry have steadily gone down—the anticipated rise in GNP for next year is 2 percent—but they are still higher than in most Western countries. The coal industry is not in good shape, petroleum and steel pose difficulties, and the less said about most consumer-goods industries, the better. But modern technologies are imported from Silicon Valley, more often than not free of charge. There are difficulties in assimilating Western techniques, but these are eventually overcome. The long and short of it is that the Soviet economy will muddle through.

Some Western experts have argued that muddling through is no longer enough at a time when such great emphasis is put on modern arms. How, they ask, can the Soviet leadership insure high-quality weapons if industry is on the whole weak and inefficient? But the civilian and the military sectors of the Soviet economy are to a considerable extent insulated from each other. This is difficult to accept for Westerners who fail to understand how an economy far more backward than today's could have produced Sputnik before America did. In similar fashion, the Soviet Union can still outproduce the U.S. in the military field provided sufficient priority is given to this task.

The real problem facing the Soviet economy is declining productivity. Because of this there is reason to believe that the income of Soviet citizens will not merely stagnate, as it has done in recent years, but may actually fall. Indeed, some foreign observers in Moscow report that Soviet living standards are now back to 1965. This being the case, we are told, just about anything might happen. Not, of course, the emergence of a Solidarity-type independent union, but more absenteeism, strikes of sorts, local labor unrest, and other mani-

* *Okhotnik vverkh nogami*, Frankfurt, 1980. This book raises a number of disturbing questions, but it is certainly one of the most interesting to have been published in recent years. It deals to a large extent with the story of Willie Fisher, better known in America under the name Rudolf Abel, the Russian spy who was arrested in the U.S. and later exchanged for Gary Powers. It has been translated into various European languages but has not been published so far in the United States.

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festations of discontent. Yet the idea that this could bring down the regime still seems exceedingly far-fetched. Such problems can be tackled by a mixture of reform, propaganda, and the threat or use of terror.

As to reform, most Western experts agree that much could be improved through relatively modest changes within the system. Curiously, successive Soviet leaders, while permitting such changes elsewhere (e.g., Hungary), and while encouraging an opening up to the West of such client states as Angola, Mozambique, and even Cuba, have been most reluctant to take similar steps at home. Some Western observers believe that the Soviet economy is so closely tied up with the political system that even minor changes are impossible without shaking the foundations of Soviet political power. I do not share this belief: economic experimentation can go hand in hand with political repression. The conservatism of the Soviet leaders is largely rooted in their psychology; sooner or later there will be some reforms. If Andropov does not take the necessary steps, the generation of younger leaders, succeeding him, will. These reforms will be palliatives, unlikely to affect the deeper sources of the evil. But they may suffice for getting through yet another decade.

Meanwhile propaganda will be stepped up. Already every newscast on Soviet television opens or concludes with some horror story from the West: the Soviet citizen may not be well off, but compare his lot with the miserable downtrodden fate of workers in the West and the growing army of unemployed! While the intellectuals do not entirely depend on the Soviet media for their information, the average Soviet citizen is influenced by the endless, systematic repetition of distortions and lies.

If propaganda fails, there remains the repressive machinery. The Polish police managed to deal with the Polish workers, and the task of the KGB in similar circumstances is likely to be much easier. Violence may not even have to be used because the knowledge that the state has overwhelming means of repression at its disposal usually suffices as a deterrent. There are at present in the Soviet Union relatively few political prisoners, fewer than in many old-fashioned dictatorships in the Third World. This is not because the Soviet Union is a less repressive regime, but on the contrary, because it is repressive *and* effective. Opposition to such a regime seems really hopeless, and few will even try it. The apparent paradox that a totalitarian regime may be able to manage with less violence than an authoritarian state has been a cause of endless confusion to some Westerners who have had the good fortune never to be exposed either to the one or to the other.

IN ADDITION to the economy, the other factors that are said to be bringing the Soviet Union to the point of collapse are the rising unrest among the nationalities, the change in the demographic balance, the intellectual dissent, the growing lack of belief in Communist doctrine, the cynicism among the younger generation. All this is indeed there, but as with the economy, the party leadership should be able to contain it.

Thus, while there does exist tension among the nationalities, for the time being it is more under control than similar problems in the U.S. and in Western Europe. The Uzbeks are now the third largest ethnic group, but they do not like the Tajiks any more than they do the Russians; the enmity among the Caucasian minorities is proverbial. Organized intellectual dissent has effectively been stamped out, Helsinki or no Helsinki; for the rest, it does not greatly concern the KGB that members of the intelligentsia listen to foreign radio stations, read books which are on the index of censorship, or admire decadent avant-garde Western art. Alcoholism is a problem, and so is absenteeism and the crime rate. But alcoholism also has its uses in a political regime which once came to power with the ardent desire to mobilize the masses and which now survives partly owing to their demobilization.

As for loss of faith in Communism and the concomitant loss of the regime's legitimacy, thought to be the indispensable basis of all authority, the rulers can always point to the need to defend the country against its outside enemies—the yellow peril, American imperialism, and so on. In any case, when Max Weber and Pareto were dealing with the question of authority, they did not know about the Soviet Union. Moreover, if unstable regimes like that of the Czars and the Ottoman empire could survive a loss of legitimacy for long periods, an efficient modern totalitarian regime is all the more able to do so.

III

NEVERTHELESS, things could still go wrong for the Soviet regime. If they do, or if there should be persistent splits in the leadership, resulting in paralysis, there are safety nets. One is Bonapartism. Marx, it will be recalled, made a notable contribution to the discussion of this subject. Trotsky was attacked for Bonapartism, so was Lenin, and so, of course, was Stalin. But Soviet Bonapartism in the 1980's means something quite different: it refers to the systematic militarization of Soviet society.*

* This concept was developed in France two years ago in an interesting, if controversial, book by Cornelius Castoriadis, *Devant la guerre*; the second volume of his work will appear soon. See also an article by General William E. Odom, "The Militarization of Soviet Society," in *Problems of Communism*, Sept./Oct. 1976. On the other hand, even enlightened Marxists (such as Eric Hobsbawm) have continued to maintain until recently that Communist states are "passionately civilian-minded."

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All knowledgeable observers agree that during the last fifteen years the Soviet military has gained influence. Whereas Khrushchev had stood up to the marshals and generals and their exaggerated demands, Brezhnev went out of his way to appease them. Soviet propaganda began to devote more space, time, and prominence to military themes, such as the army as the embodiment of patriotism and as a means of inculcating order and discipline and other essential values in the young generation. An unending stream of books and articles praised the glorious role of the armed forces in the Great Patriotic War.

There is no denying, however, that the direct political impact so far has been modest. The army had 18 representatives in the Central Committee of the party in 1971, their number grew to 20 five years later, and reached 24 at the 26th Party Congress in 1981—out of a total of 319. And on the Central Committee Secretariat, which is the real seat of power, the army is only indirectly represented—by Epishev, the general in charge of political indoctrination.

Nor is it certain that the term "representation" is correct in this context, for the armed forces are not a monolithic bloc standing for a clear, well-defined group interest. They do, of course, have certain interests in common, but there is no reason to assume that relations among Soviet army, navy, air-force, and missile forces are notably more cordial than in other countries.

On two past occasions army officers were called in for help by the supreme party leaders: in 1953 to liquidate Beria because they could not trust the KGB, and again by Khrushchev who needed Marshal Zhukov's help to prevail over his rivals. But these were exceptions, and Zhukov was soon after demoted by Khrushchev. Today the defense minister is a civilian even if he carries the title of a marshal; the KGB keeps a watchful eye on the marshals and generals as on everyone else in Soviet society. Furthermore, there are several departments in the Central Committee Secretariat which take an active interest in appointments, party work, propaganda, etc. in the armed forces. Almost 95 percent of the officer corps belongs to the party or the Komsomol.

The army, in short, seems to be under firm party control. If Soviet society has been militarized, it is equally true that the armed forces have been politicized, and that there has been a great deal of congruence and interpenetration. If all goes well, the hold of the party bureaucracy will be in no danger. On the other hand, if the party bureaucracy can no longer cope with the challenges facing it, if there is a prolonged stalemate in the struggle for power, or if the army has to be called in to support one faction or another in the contest, or to suppress challenges to the party's power, the armed forces would no longer be a mere tool and might develop a political will of their own. Paradoxically, the Jaruzelski solution, which was adopted reluctantly and as a last resort, could one day become a new paradigm.

Fifteen years ago Soviet observers of the Third World discovered the important political role of the army as a carrier of revolutionary ideas (or of modernization), and some of them wrote glowingly about generals as revolutionaries with epaulettes (*revolutioneri v pogonakh*). What irony if the Soviet Union were to draw its inspiration one day from Third World experience. The Soviet army is not exactly a revolutionary force, but its record as a manager and innovator has been reasonably good; it was, for instance, the first (together with the KGB) to use computers on a large scale. Could it teach the bureaucrats a lesson or two? In the Third World army officers are substitutes for the proletariat; in Poland—and perhaps in the Soviet Union tomorrow—they may have to act as surrogates for the party secretaries.

Today all this is no more than possibility, but it certainly seems more probable than the emergence —such as was envisaged by some students of Soviet affairs only a few years ago—of a new managerial and state elite pushing back the influence of the party bureaucrats. But could the army run the country? If the party apparatus has become too unwieldy and ossified, the military complex is also very big and lacks political and economic know-how. The armed forces may provide the foot soldiers, but there is no new charismatic military leader in the Soviet Union at the present time. There has been no war in recent years in which young (or middle-aged) men of talent could have distinguished themselves and acquired a national following.

But if the party bureaucracy should no longer be able to cope, there is yet another possibility. Those who have maintained that the Soviet Union faces in the long run the choice between petrification and pluralism (or at least "peripherization") may well have stumbled on a real insight which can be of help in predicting future developments in the Soviet Union. But one has to treat this insight as Marx treated Hegel, by standing it on its head. The new pluralism will be based not on managers, regional state officials, and other "liberal" or quasi-liberal technocrats—these may come in on the margins—but on a coalition of party secretaries, the KGB, and the army.

The "organs" of state security, as they are commonly called in the Soviet Union, have been kept on a short leash ever since Stalin's death and Beria's execution. The party bureaucracy suffered more than anyone else from the terror and the purges, and the last thing it wanted was a repeat performance. From 1953 on, state security was held strictly under party control, and the heads of the KGB

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were second-raters. But then, almost imperceptibly, KGB influence increased. In 1973 Andropov became a full member of the Politburo; even the great Dzherzhinski, Lenin's friend, the founder of the secret police, had only been an alternate member at the time, and Beria, Stalin's crony, became a full member only toward the end of his political career. It could be argued that Andropov's elevation had more to do with his personal ability or charm, and that it was purely accidental that he has now been joined by Aliev, another veteran of the secret police. It is possible that this is the case —but there are many other equally able people in the Soviet Union who have not become members of the Politburo.

Andropov, for all we know, may disappear soon; he is said to be in indifferent health, or he may fall victim to a cabal. But the power of the KGB transcends personalities. It is a state within a state, not just an espionage agency and a secret police force. It is the keeper of all state secrets, with enterprises in all walks of life, and with a little army; it is the agency always entrusted with particularly important and sensitive assignments. The Soviet system needs it to survive, and at the same time it is always a potential threat to the bureaucracy. In the 1950's and 1960's, when it was being reorganized and rebuilt, it was in no position to make a bid for power. Today it is stronger than ever before and self-confident. At a time of crisis it would be the obvious instrument to use.

A great many people in the Soviet Union have been talking of late about the need, as it were, to "get the country moving again." But the middle and lower echelons of the bureaucracy are averse to change; too many vested interests are involved. How to carry out changes against such resistance, open and secret? Sooner or later a future leader, or possibly a group of leaders, will look for a transmission belt, parallel to the party, to carry out their orders, or at least to make sure that their instructions are obeyed. The KGB could fulfill this function.

Certainly the Soviet Union has always been a police state, but the police have never run it. During the very first years of the 20th century, the rulers of Russia briefly played with the idea of police socialism. It did not come to much. Contrary to widespread belief, not even the Stalin period was characterized by the arbitrary rule of the secret police; it was the despotism of one man who had subjugated the secret-police apparatus, used it for his own purposes, and ultimately had its leading cadres shot. If, therefore, the KGB were to establish itself as a new committee of public safety, it would have to do so from within the party. This would be an interesting new stage in the development of Soviet Communism. Soviet history during the last two decades has been predictable and boring; now there is a chance that the unforeseen may happen: police Communism.

IV

Finally, there is the question of the young generation. Everyone who has met the products of Soviet society knows that they are in some respects different from their parents. They were born after World War II, and do not remember the most difficult years in Soviet history. Their historical memory usually begins with the Khrushchev period. It is difficult to find revolutionary ideologists among them; the very fact that they have to learn the doctrines of Marxism-Leninism (often by heart) in schools and the Komsomol, turns them against it, or at least induces indifference. The Soviet young are quite sure of themselves, career-oriented, very interested in material things; not for them the disdain of consumerism often found among the offspring of the middle class in the West. If, by a miracle, freedom of expression and organization were restored in the Soviet Union tomorrow, about the last thing the young would be interested in would be a New Left movement or a "Green" party, earnestly discussing Marx, Lenin, Rosa Luxemburg, Frantz Fanon, and Che Guevara.

At the same time, they take certain aspects of the system for granted and would no more question them than their Western contemporaries would question the right to buy jeans and to frequent discotheques. They are in favor of order and discipline, they are on the whole patriotic even though they may deride official propaganda. They are family men and women, and those of integrity and intelligence among them will look for careers far away from politics (leaving politics to the less desirable elements). If they have a personal philosophy, it is individualism. This may come as a surprise to foreigners who have been told about collectivism, who have read about Pavel Korchagin and the other young heroes of the revolution and the 1920's. But wanting to be left alone is precisely a reaction against official theory and practice. The Soviet young have come to hold the private sphere of life in high esteem. They want "to do their own thing" to the extent that it is possible in a system of this kind. (And it is true that in this respect the Brezhnev regime *did* make concessions.)

The young, in short, are neither rebels nor reactionaries, but rather apolitical, even apathetic. They want a change for the better (and certainly an improvement in living standards), but by and large they seem reconciled to an imperfect order because they see no path to radical improvement. There may be small groups of militants among them, but these are untypical. (None of this necessarily applies to working-class youth, about whom very little is known abroad, and whose reactions may come as a surprise to those in power and, *a fortiori*, to observers abroad.)

What effect will these generational changes have? The short answer is that we do not know. There

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were those in the West who claimed for a long time that everything would change for the better once a new generation came to the fore, unencumbered by the heritage of Stalinism. This school of thought took it for granted that everything wrong with the Soviet Union was the fault of the older generation—first for having created Stalinism, later for having put up with it, and lastly for not having done away with its heritage. This, in turn, was based on the assumption that Stalinism was an aberration, or, as others saw it, a necessary stage of development which Soviet society had outgrown. The grain of truth in these assumptions is not very substantial.

For what Marx wrote in 1852 about the "enormous French state bureaucracy" enmeshing the body of French society like a net, "choking all pores and stifling innovation," is equally true of Soviet society today. The "enormous" French bureaucracy counted half-a-million people, whereas in the Soviet Union their number is fifty times larger. They may tolerate a revolution from above, but only if it does not harm their interests. And yet Soviet society simply cannot be streamlined without making many of these bureaucrats redundant. This, to repeat, is the dilemma facing Andropov and those who will come after him. The alternative is to do little or nothing.

Some argue that the system *must* change to remain competitive and productive, to keep pace with the rest of the world, or for whatever other reason. But not even such streamlining will necessarily lead to a freer system; the idea that despotism cannot accommodate computers and robots is more than a little naive. Furthermore, we know from history that political elites can cling to power for decades, perhaps even for centuries, even if they have long since fulfilled their historical role (assuming they ever had one), even if they have lost faith in their doctrine and mission, even if they no longer have the active support of their followers.

True, there is no precedent for the Soviet system and no parallel, but this alone provides no sufficient reason for optimism. Political systems have changed as a result of military defeat, or of revolution, and they have collapsed following the radical decay of their foundations. But only over long periods of time. In our age war has become impossible and the anti-revolutionary potential, the means of repression at the disposal of a modern dictatorship, are so much stronger than the would-be rebels as to doom any such attempt from the beginning. It is not even sufficient for the incumbents to lose their self-confidence; a stage has to be reached in which they are no longer cohesive, and no longer have the will to defend their privileges. There are no indications that any such process has taken place in the Soviet Union. Some Western leaders may have lost their nerve; in the Soviet leadership there is no room for hesitation and world weariness. The Soviet *fin de siècle* seems to be as yet a good distance ahead.

The unique character of the Soviet system, a frozen revolution which can neither advance nor find its Thermidor, makes prediction dangerous. It would be foolish altogether to rule out radical change in the Soviet Union in the foreseeable future. All one can say is that at present it seems unlikely, and that, if it should occur, it would be triggered by circumstances and by forces which cannot possibly be anticipated today.

V

Successive Soviet leaders have stressed the primacy of foreign policy despite all the urgent problems facing them at home; as Brezhnev used to say, foreign policy is our most important domestic problem. There is no reason to assume that this will change under his successors. On the contrary, the successors may well be more assertive in pursuing Soviet interests in various parts of the world and also more subtle, more adventurous on the diplomatic level, trying to split the coalition of their "enemies"—making friendly gestures toward some, bringing pressure to bear on others, patching up some old, unnecessary quarrels.

Soviet foreign policy will watch with particular interest events in Africa and the Persian Gulf region. The Middle East will remain a trouble zone for a long time to come, Iran and Pakistan are unstable, and there may be opportunities elsewhere to give a little help to the forces serving Soviet interests. In not a few African countries, the presence of a few hundred proxies can make all the difference. Peter Wiles has drawn attention to the fact, disregarded by most Western experts on the Third World, that the parallels drawn between Angola and Mozambique today and Ghana, Guinea, and Egypt in the 1960's are quite misleading, since these latter countries, though they were allied to the Soviet Union, never proclaimed themselves Marxist-Leninist, did not found and encourage Communist parties, and did not persecute religion:

> The distinction between temporary allies and permanent imitations is of great emotional and intellectual importance. When Sekou Touré was young and Nasser and Nkrumah were alive, many knowledgeable people lost their heads and cried "wolf": there was no solid empirical justification for calling these people or their states "Communist." Therefore today many knowledgeable people refuse to cry "wolf" when the wolf stands in plain undoubted view.

One should add that the issue is not only of psychological and intellectual but also of considerable political interest. For it leads to the question of whether these advances in Africa and elsewhere are

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regarded by the Soviet leaders as irreversible, to be covered by something akin to a Brezhnev doctrine for the Third World.

It was only to be expected that the Soviet Union under Andropov would show more suppleness in its approach to arms control, and Western leaders quite obviously have to explore any proposals for the new elements they may contain. But it remains the case that although the Soviet Union does not want nuclear war, it does want "real security," and this, given the Soviet mentality, means that the Soviet Union has to be the strongest power in the world, not just stronger than America but stronger than all its potential enemies taken together. It means retaining the initiative in world affairs, and it means expanding Soviet influence wherever possible. The Soviet Union not only has to be the strongest power, it also has to be perceived as such.

The problem as far as the Soviet Union is concerned, then, is not Reagan's "aggressive language" but America's power. America would be suspect, a potential enemy, even if its President were a member of the Committee on East-West Accord. Indeed, even a Communist America would be a potential antagonist, perhaps even a more dangerous one, for unimpeded by liberal restraints and public opinion, its leaders could pursue a foreign policy with the strength commensurate with its real power. Détente, as many Americans interpret it, is possible, but only with an American leadership willing to give up its interests outside the Western hemisphere.

This state of affairs has nothing to do with the Soviet belief in world revolution. It has nothing to do with George Kennan's notion of an unconscious American need for an external enemy. It has nothing to do with "demonizing" the Soviet leaders. It has to do with the tendency of a global power unfettered by domestic constraints to expand its influence until it reaches determined resistance; it has to do with the fact that the Soviet Union is not just Russia but the leader of a bloc, and as such has to live up to its "historical mission" by maintaining an "irreversible advance," even if at a slow pace; and lastly, it has to do with the fact that the existence of societies of a different kind will in itself constitute a threat to a Soviet leadership until these societies accept that Soviet power is the strongest on earth and adjust their behavior accordingly.

All this drives the Soviet leadership to expand its sphere of influence wherever opportunities arise. It is perfectly true that the impetus behind this drive is not as strong as it once was, and that it does not lead the Soviets into adventures except by miscalculation. If the drive continues, it is not because the Russians are so strong but because the West, disunited and confused, is even weaker. If the West showed firmer resolve, the international situation would be much less tense and there would be less reason for fear as the new period of Soviet history begins.

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Bialik's Hint

Cynthia Ozick

"What is the question?"
—GERTRUDE STEIN, dying

I ONCE had a theory about Jewish language. I began by renaming English: I called it "New Yiddish." Since the majority of Jews alive today are native English speakers, I reasoned, English was in the way of becoming a Jewish language for nearly universal Diaspora employment, much as Old Yiddish (or Ladino, its Sephardic counterpart) used to be before its murderous weakening by the mappers of *Lebensraum*. I posited a variety of literary forms for New Yiddish, and imagined for it a liturgical spirit that would nevertheless not contravene what it is nowadays fashionable to call Post-Modern Modes.

Before that, I held some notions, clearly not very original, about the creation of a literature of Midrash, or fictive commentary. Jewish writing, I thought, whether or not written by Jews (I cited George Eliot and Thomas Mann), was that literature which dared to introduce into the purely imaginative the elements of judgment and interpretation. Literature, I declared, was not simply an enterprise of essence ("A poem must not mean / but be"), but must be charged with the power to sift through the light and the dark. Story must not only be, but mean. And to back this up, I quoted from Judah Halevi, who accused Hellenism of producing "flowers without fruit," in contrast to the Jewish spirit, which bears the ripe fruit of responsibility and judgment.

In addition, I had a theory about the more local and partial conditions of American Jewish writing. Bellow, Roth, Paley, Malamud, I privately argued, had taken the post-immigration experience as far as it could go. Anyone who hoped to push forward in that same direction of portraiture and sensibility was bound to end up as an imitator. For new work, the aftermath of the immigration was played out and offered nothing but repetition and desiccation —or something worse: ventriloquism, fakery, nostalgia, sentimentalism, cardboard romanticism. The solution, it seemed to me, was to escape the descent into "ethnicity"—debased and debasing sociologist's misnomer—and to drive toward the matrix: the Jewish Idea.

The Jewish Idea, I believed, was characterized by two momentous standards. The first, the standard of anti-idolatry, led to the second, the standard of distinction-making.* Together, these two ideals, in the form of urgencies, had created Jewish history. The future of a Jewish literature was to derive from an understanding of what a Jew is, not partially, locally, sociologically, "ethnically," but in principle. To be a Jew is to be old in history, but not only that; to be a Jew is to be a member of a distinct civilization expressed through an oceanic culture in possession of a group of essential concepts and a multitude of texts and attitudes elucidating those concepts. Next to the density of such a proposition, how gossamer were the stories of those writers "of Jewish extraction" whose characters are pale indifferent echoes of "America."

Lately I have been thinking hard about the cultural destiny of those very writers. What comes to me now is far less than "theory"; a mere meditation: a mooning, say, over the effects of the Enlightenment and its concomitant issue, Jewish Emancipation.

Gershom Scholem has shown, with miraculous intellectual daring, how Sabbatai Zevi, the 17th-century false messiah, was the precursor of Jewish Enlightenment fervor as well as of Reform Judaism. The electrifying wand that unites these seemingly dissimilar strands—an irrational mass delusion giving rise to rational skepticism—is the purposeful relinquishment of the "yoke of the Law," Sabbatai Zevi's deliberate snapping of the chain of commitment to the central root system of historical Jewish expression. A manic-depressive, the false messiah was a performer of "strange acts," kabbalistically-inspired religious ceremonies without precedent; and once freedom from the Jewish mainstream was fostered, Scholem claimed, Jewish ideation could and did follow many paths formerly

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CYNTHIA OZICK's most recent book is *Levitation: Five Fictions. Art & Ardor*, a collection of essays, will be published by Knopf in May. The present article is adapted from a talk Miss Ozick gave at a conference on Jewish letters since World War II sponsored by the Rockefeller Foundation and held in Bellagio, Italy this past winter.

* I borrow this remarkably succinct phrase from Professor Avi Erlich of Queens College, whose formulation it is.

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unthinkable. The variety of 19th-century currents in which Jews were active, socialism and secularism among them, had their origins in the volcanic pseudo-theological events of the 17th. Sabbatai Zevi, hoping to lead a liberated Jewish people triumphantly back to Jerusalem, repudiated the constraints and hatreds of Europe and proclaimed his own immediately serviceable messianic Emancipation: the rules, he showed, could be broken, society and politics need not stand in the way, nothing imaginable was preposterous. That he concluded his own career in the posture of a forced convert to Islam may itself have seemed preposterous; but he had already demonstrated to a rigidly structured and restricted community that anything can happen.

If Sabbatai Zevi, promising extravagant new possibilities, opened the way to internal Jewish liberalization (or deviation), the external route was still barred. Not until the actual Emancipation did Jews experience any choice more subtle or flexible than conversion, and the effects of post-Enlightenment choice have been shaking Jewish life ever since. It is true that Europe cancelled both the Enlightenment and the Emancipation for a dozen cataclysmic years in the heart of our own century, the long-range influence of which will perhaps remain unresolved for another hundred years. Or, rather, from another point of view it might be said that Hitler carried the Enlightenment to its inevitable resolution, bringing *liberté* to its highest romantic pitch: the liberty, with no brake of tradition or continuity, to imagine everything, hence to do anything. And Zionism, in one interpretation, is itself a late-blooming version of Jewish Emancipation.

But the object of these speculations is the fact of choice itself. Emancipation opened the way of entry into all the complex and abundant allure of Gentile culture. On the face of things, the old restrictions fell away, and it was possible to be, as the famous phrase had it, "a man abroad and a Jew at home"; but the very formulation of that notion split off "man" from "Jew," and Jew from humanity, so that "Jew," no longer an instance of humanity, as the rabbinic tradition held, came rather to represent a difference from humanity, eventually an opposition to it, precisely as the advocates of Christian triumphalism had always maintained. And on the Jewish side, to accept the formulation was already to reject the Jewish way, which claimed wholeness of person. Hence the locution "just Jewish." "These matters are not just Jewish," we hear the Jewish heirs of the Enlightenment explain. "They should interest everyone," as if Jews are automatically excluded from the compass of "everyone." As, in the medieval scheme, they were.

Yet we Jews are all—all of us, insofar as we live in the world—children of the Enlightenment. It is a condition that was prepared for us generations ago—even in the enclosed chambers of the East European *shtetl*, when it began to be infiltrated by Haskalah, with its sense of holiness-as-literature and truth-as-art replacing Torah-from-Sinai. For the Sephardim, a kind of foretaste of Enlightenment occurred three centuries earlier, in the freely intermingling dual culture of the Spanish era; and the same was true of Jews in Renaissance Italy. But Golden Age Spain and Renaissance Italy were idiosyncratic moments, and, so to speak, meteoric flashes; they came as bright patches, erratic and unpredictable, unlike the Enlightenment's singular and steady Grand Principle. It is the Grand Principle that confers on us its legacy. Writers especially may not repudiate the gifts of the Enlightenment because freedom of the imagination—the freedom to imagine alternative lives, on which poets feed—is what the Enlightenment offered, delectably, in contrast to the traditional mold of an immovable condition.

Two hundred years post-Enlightenment, the choice is not whether to accept cultural liberation and variety—we were, after all, *born* into the Grand Principle—but whether to fuse that freedom with the Sinaitic challenge of distinctive restraint and responsibility that the rabbis held out. The democratic and egalitarian Grand Principle, seductive to the liberated and brotherly mind, celebrated not uniqueness but multiplicity, not *religio*, a binding together, but proliferation. Nothing could be more natural than that the 18th century's Grand Principle should give birth to the 19th century's wayward Romanticism. Yet the rabbis' contrary call was by no means a cry against imagination; inventive rather than conservative thinkers, the assembly of disputants who comprise the rabbinic way were nevertheless wary of the fancifulness of enchanting alternatives and branching roads with no promise of arrival. The rabbis' call to imagination, by contrast, was a call to imagine arrival: homecoming, deliverance, fruition, resolution, an idealism of character, right conduct, just determinations, communal well-being. In short, the messianic impulse.

It is plain that the Enlightenment, too, though it turned away from Christianity, was all the same formed in the fertilization dish of Jewish and Christian messianism. But Liberty, Fraternity, and Equality tend (more than intend) to break down distinctions, and right conduct can emerge only out of the stringent will toward distinction-making. The rabbinic way is to avoid blur, to see how one thing is not another thing, how the road is not the arrival, the wish not the deed, the design not the designer, man not God. The true ship is the shipbuilder, Emerson said, in a single phrase that sums up all of Romanticism; but the rabbis would not allow for the ship until it was *there*—not out of literal-mindedness, but because it is spiritually necessary to make ultimate distinctions: otherwise

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Creator becomes confused with creation, leading to the multiform versions of antinomianism from which Jewish monotheism characteristically, and uniquely, turns away its purified face.

CHAIM NACHMAN BIALIK, the great fountain of Hebrew modernism, in a magisterial essay comparing the aggadic to the halakhic—the formless to the structured, the imaginatively wanderlusting to the imagination of arrival—remarks that the "whole justification" for "literature" and "creation" is the sense of duty. A stunning conclusion. "Modern Hebrew literature," Bialik wrote in 1916, "on the intellectual side . . . has nothing to say; its only approach to life is through the narrow wicket-gate of a dubious aestheticism." "The value of Aggadah," he asserts, "is that it issues in Halakhah. Aggadah that does not bring Halakhah in its train is ineffective." If we pause to translate Aggadah as lore, and Halakhah as law, or Aggadah as the realm of the fancy, and Halakhah as the court of duty, then what Bialik proposes next is astonishing. Contrariwise, he says, Halakhah can bring Aggadah in *its* train. Restraint the begetter of poetry? "Is she not," and now Bialik is speaking of the Sabbath, "a source of life and holiness to a whole nation, and a fountain of inspiration to its singers and poets?" Yet the Tractates that touch on the Sabbath consist, in their hundreds of pages, "of discussions and decisions on the minutiae of the thirty-nine kinds of work and their branches, and on the limits within which it is permissible to carry on the Sabbath. What the Sabbath candles are to be made of; what a beast may be loaded with; how the limits may be jointly fixed—such are the questions discussed. What weariness of the flesh! What waste of good wits on every trifling point!" Weariness of flesh the begetter of inspiration? Waste of good wits bringing rapture in its train? These hairsplitters deciding on the minutiae of the thirty-nine kinds of work, Bialik determines, "are in very truth artists of life in the throes of creation," and the perfection of their work, "antlike and giantlike at once," is the "sacred and sublime . . . Queen Sabbath . . . endowed with wondrous and dazzling beauty."

In all this Bialik shows us that he is addressing his matter with a post-Enlightenment mentality. His view of the halakhic thinkers is tinged with secularity, anthropology, ambiguity: these rabbis, despite or because of their attention to "trifling points," are "artists," their work is "creation." Not for one moment does Bialik contend that the Sabbath is from Sinai, that the Sabbath is a divine gift. In short, Bialik is engaged in a modernist literary contemplation, and he has, moreover, seized on a post-Enlightenment choice: the choice of the fusion of secular aesthetic culture with Jewish sensibility. Aggadah, pre-European, pre-Christian, is, in its lightning and mercurial way, a prefiguration of the European Christian Enlightenment: i.e., an ideal of imaginative freedom that is nevertheless more compassionate than any purely Hellenic ancestry would allow. The ideal of Fraternity, for instance, inevitably suggests humanitarianism more than aestheticism; and Greek democracy, it should be recalled, though it might be fraternal among patricians, was not humanitarian, lying as it did across the backs of slaves and barbarians.

So it might be argued that the Enlightenment "Judaized" Europe when it granted equality to Jews and agreed to offer them citizenship. On the one hand, it was redolent of Jewishly cherished ideals of messianism. On the other, it was a welcoming, humane, and compassionate act of brotherhood toward real and living Jews. But the Jews, in accepting Emancipation (rather, in rushing fervently toward it), agreed on their side to de-Judaize themselves. To be enthralled by Bach, it is necessary to suspend disbelief in, or at least distrust of, Christianity—one must enter the music with an opening of the heart to Bach's exaltations, and Bach's exaltations belong to Christendom. The cathedrals and all the splendors of European art exacted from Jews a degree of self-negation. But this self-negation in the face of the majority culture—the price of participation in it—was trivial compared to the larger cost implied in the formulation "a man abroad and a Jew at home." What this meant was the privatization of the Jewish mind, a shrinking of its compass. In political terms, the price of citizenship was the loss of corporate self-government, the relinquishment of the sovereign rights and privileges of internal autonomy. All this was concrete and measurable, the product of a bargain sealed by Napoleon's amazing call for the renewal of the Sanhedrin, which delivered itself up wholly to Napoleonic control, and finished off Jewish life as a self-reliant force, however otherwise restricted. From that moment forward, the idea of the kind of cultural realm in which a Jew is situated began to diminish: the opportunities of citizenship were desperately valued and welcomed, but in mind and in humanistic scope, the physically and socially delimited closet of the ghetto was broader than national citizenship, which critically reduced Jewish self-definition. From an abundant and spacious theory of civilization embracing the whole range of human culture, post-Enlightenment Jewish intellectual territory withdrew to the narrow claims of "religion," "persuasion," "faith." The Enlightenment and the Emancipation, in their offer of breadth, reduced and cramped Jewish creative space.

FOR some, that space narrowed and darkened so radically that it vanished. Such Jews chose to live entirely within the acreage of Enlightenment. Some made that decision immediately upon Emancipation, and their progeny have not been Jews for two centuries. Others have taken

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longer, or are just beginning the journey toward radical Jewish abandonment.* But for all Jews everywhere, the idea of what it meant to be a Jew was crucially altered. Jewish meaning, from its origins in the widest understanding of civilization, withered to an "ism." Judaism: the mere denominational (from which, in an atmosphere of nearly universal Western secularism, it is not only easy but logical to fall away). The effects of this "ism-ization," and its even more one-dimensional American issue, "ethnicity," have been an irritation ever since. In consequence of the reduction of Jewish intellectual authority to a "persuasion," the sense of a Jewish national civilization has been denigrated as "tribal," and the reestablishment of a sovereign and autonomous Israel has been seen as an affront to the Napoleonic bargain that demanded the surrender of autonomy. The idea of a wider Jewish heritage, moreover, is regarded as a betrayal of the Jewish promise of "good behavior": the promise to turn culture itself into the mere marginal sliver of an "ism," hanging, so to speak, from the synagogue lintel. "Be a man in the street and a Jew in your tent, / Be a brother to your countryman and a servant to your king," Judah Leib Gordon sang, not in the France of Voltaire, but in the Russia of 1863.

Everywhere in the Diaspora today this promise is still being meticulously kept, held in place by the ongoing vestige of Napoleon's threat against what—in pluralist and ethnic America—is designated, in acerbic tones, as "dual loyalty." Recently a post-Enlightenment American citizen of the Jewish persuasion wrote a letter to the editor of the New York *Times*, complaining that Israel is a Jewish country with Jewish institutions, including the effrontery of a Jewish army—a "ghetto," in fact, for Jews only. (Just as, presumably, the Indian subcontinent, with its multiple Indian institutions, including its Indian army, is a ghetto for Indians only.) The revolutionary is taken for the stereotyped; the larger daring and the wider culture are judged to be the smaller and the narrower. Much of Europe's growing fury at the state of Israel, we may be sure, is the frustrated post-Enlightenment realization that the Jews have after all reneged on the Napoleonic bargain, and have dared to move boldly out from being a sometimes tolerated "persuasion" to becoming once again a fully developed concentration of varied human behavior. Europe "humanely" welcomed the state of Israel as long as it was misconstrued to be simply a "haven" for the broken survivors of Europe's own abattoir; but once it begins to be recognized that a more fundamental program is in hand, and that what the founding of Israel represents is, rather, a declaration of the renewal of an entire civilization, uncontained by the self-confining politesse of the Napoleonic bargain, the heirs of Napoleon detect insolence. The Jews are escaping from their normal condition and place into the transcendence of full national expression—a privilege owed to all peoples but the Jews.

Paradoxically, however, Zionism as an Emancipation movement was itself cradled in the Enlightenment, and only provides a new arena for the problem of Jewish cultural allegiance. For the last two hundred years—the period since the promulgation of the Grand Principle—each Jewish intellectual generation, wherever it has lived (and this of course includes Jerusalem and Tel Aviv), has had to make the decision anew: whether or not to pass wholly into the majority civilization and to cut the Jewish tie; or the alternative.

WHAT is the alternative? Remember that we are speaking of Jewish writers and intellectuals. Only for a very tiny minority has the alternative been to remain within what nowadays we think of as the "Jewish world." And let us remind ourselves once again that it was the Enlightenment itself that was responsible for the narrowing of that Jewish world in the mind of modern Jews. Before the Emancipation, Jews might live politically enclosed in a segregated society—but the content of the Jewish mind, through the all-inclusive reach and memory of Talmud, hardly felt itself to be separated from the whole range of human experience, and daily took the pulse of every human concern, from ethics to hygiene to adjudication. If I hammer too much at this, if I pull at the reader's sleeve too decisively in emphasizing all this, it is because such a reminder cannot be urged too often; and because the idea of Talmud as a civilizing and especially as a spacious force is not only unpopular with many, but repellent to some. An understanding of the unique *content* of Jewish genius has been forfeited by the great majority of modern Jews. It is the Enlightenment that has made us forfeit the understanding and forget the content.

And it was the Enlightenment, in letting Jews "in," that defined them as having been "out." Of course they *were* out, from the point of view of the nations they inhabited. In a Europe of farmers Jews alone could not work the land; Jews were not

* A journey undertaken often in extraordinary ignorance of its starting point. "Chicken soup and Yiddish jokes may tarry awhile. But the history of the Jews from now on will be one with the history of everybody else," the novelist Herbert Gold has written, with a clear sense of Enlightenment destination. Allen Guttmann, in a study of assimilation in Jewish-American literature, astutely comments: "How did chicken soup come to be understood as almost synonymous with Jewishness? How did it happen that Americans often assume that the folkways of *Mitteleuropa* or of the Russian *shtetl* are really the essentials of Jewishness? To answer such questions fully is to tell the story of the American Jews, but this much is certain: a minority that adopted many of the traits of its European neighbors is now distinguished in the eyes of its American neighbors by these adopted characteristics rather than by the fundamental differences that originally accounted for the minority status." (*The Jewish Writer in America*, Oxford, 1971)

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permitted to own land. In daily occupation Jews alone were bitterly restricted: in some regions Jews were confined to the sale of old clothes and nothing else. Looking for a loophole in a still feudal economy that was closed to them, an enterprising few, eschewing ragpicking and inventing capitalism, became moneylenders, and were hounded and castigated for charging interest, which the Church called "usury"—though only until the rise of Christian banking. Given a thousand strangling restrictions, enthusiastic popular pogroms, steady persecution and unending general revilement, it is an absolute fact that the Jews were out. But what European historians overlook, or perhaps do not know, what the bigots of the Enlightenment (and the radiant Voltaire was such a bigot, deeply contemptuous of Jews, whom he viewed as obscurantist) deliberately shut themselves off from, was what the inner life of the Jewish community consisted in. In an illiterate Europe, ordinary Jews were not simply literate but text-obsessed. In an idolatrous Europe, ordinary Jews were resolutely monotheist. Jewish history as a record of oppression is only a quarter-history.

"History is about the positive and not the negative, about what man does and not what he suffers," Benedetto Croce puts it. "Man's action combats obstructing beliefs and tendencies, conquers them, overcomes them, reduces them to be mere stuff for his handling; and on this man rears himself up." And: "Creativeness, and it alone, is the true and sole subject of history."* Jewish history is overwhelmingly an instance of Croce's dictum: Jewish history is overwhelmingly intellectual history; and the heroes of the Enlightenment, with whom it might be said modern intellectual history began, were cut off from the energetic and brilliant culture that lived side-by-side with them, in the same towns, in the despised Jew-streets. In releasing the Jews from the crushing grip of the Church's Judas-views, which declared the Jews to be a murderous, traitorous, obsolete, and superfluous vestige, the Enlightenment nevertheless did not abandon the idea that the Jews were a people without a worthy culture. The thinkers of the Enlightenment believed that in allowing the Jews entry into European culture, they were offering a dazzling gift —and indeed they were. But they could not conceive that there might lurk, in the shadowy possession of the Jew-streets, an alternative culture with a luminousness of its own, residing in a thousand brains; and no one, Gentile or Jew, understood at once that the Enlightenment was the beginning, for Jewish intellectual life, of a new alternative never before possible.

What, let us ask again, is that new alternative? Its premise is, first, the recognition that no contemporary writer, Gentile or Jewish, Israel-bred or Diaspora-born, remains untouched by the Enlightenment—i.e., by the conditions of modernism. Moreover, for a Jew to continue to move toward Enlightenment values exclusively—and politically these include such later structures as socialism and Marxism—is, by now, not to dissent but to conform. By now, to feel oneself an integral member of the great matrix of European-American arts-and-letters is surely to slide down the greasy pole. In literature, the chief post-Enlightenment value is "originality"; but nothing is less original, by now, than, say, a Parisian or New York novelist "of Jewish extraction" to write as if he had never heard of a Jewish idea, especially if, as is likely, he never *has* heard of a Jewish idea. "Be a man abroad and a Jew at home" has now been truncated to "Be a man abroad"—and of these there are a hundred thousand and more, all alike, all purged of Jewish understanding. Consequently it becomes increasingly tedious to read about these hopelessly limited and parochial characters in so-called "Jewish fiction" whose Jewish connections appear solely in the form of neighborhood origin or distinctive sentence pattern or superannuated exhausted Bolshevik leaning. By now, for writers to throw themselves entirely into the arms of post-Enlightenment culture is no alternative at all. It is a laziness. It is the final shudder of spent thought: out of which no literature, Jewish or otherwise, can hope to spring.

THE new alternative, then. Bialik catches hold of the first strand: the transformation of certain cultural elements of the Enlightenment into Jewish substance and substantiality—belles lettres, for instance, signifying, for Hebrew, an extraordinary innovation and modernization. This is what Bialik means in urging that "the value of Aggadah [belles lettres] is that it issues in Halakhah [Jewish substance]."

The new alternative—call it Bialik's hint—leads us back to another period when non-Jewish elements were converted into Jewish substance—a huge and resplendent precedent, as awesome and finally as immanent as a stroke of nature, worthy of conscientious attention but calling—alas—for genius.

Consider: the Jews who inhabit the great tales of Scripture are recognizably human like ourselves, and in most important respects they are recognizably Jewish like ourselves. But in one respect—and for us it is indissoluble from what we think of as the Jewish sensibility—they are *not* recognizable. Unlike ourselves, they are unconcerned with the sublime nature of Text. They are indifferent to the passion for study. They may be the subject of a holy text, but no text is holy for them.† It is true that Muhammad's inspired ascription for us is the People of the Book; but the people *in* the Book are, it is entirely clear, not a bookish sort. They are

* *History as the Story of Liberty*, Meridian, 1955.

† A prefiguration of study-centeredness, however—and "immanence," as Professor Yosef Yerushalmi points out—occurs in Nehemiah 8:1-9.

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not, but *we* are: if we are anything at all, we know ourselves to be text-centered. How is it, then, that such a discontinuity of character should arise? We read that Esau went hunting—but what was Jacob doing in his tent? It is a charming back-construction to imagine that he was probably studying Torah.

The idea of the holiness of study is an idea born of fusion. The holiness is Jewish; the study—the majestic elevation of study—is Greek and Platonic. Formal study—a master and his pupil—is not to be found in Scripture. Scriptural heroes, even the poets among them, Moses, Deborah, David, and Solomon, are not heroes rooted in the grandeur of intellectual power, no matter how gifted or ingenious they may be. One of the vastest minds of Scripture is surely the brilliantly original Joseph, wily dreamer and inspired dream interpreter, salvational economist, and, no doubt, scientist and architect. Surely Joseph is what we mean when we speak of genius. But when we try to imagine what the heroism of intellectual power might be, we do not think of Joseph; we think of Socrates.

What altered Jews and Jewishness forever was, of course, the destruction of the Temple, the ruin of Jerusalem, the long bitter fact of Exile; and, simultaneously, the turn to study as substitute Temple, substitute Jerusalem, substitute flowering homeland. When Zechariah called for the greater might of spirit, he was prophesying the turn to the Jewish text. But the source of study-consciousness, the source of intellect as the paramount tool of right conduct, is the Socratic, not the biblical, font. It was the gradual superimposition of the Socratic primacy of intellect upon the Jewish primacy of holiness that produced the familiar, and now completely characteristic, Jewish personality we know. Because the Jewish mind has wholly assimilated the Platonic emphasis on the nobility of pedagogy, on study as the route to mastery and illumination, there is no Jew alive today who is not also resonantly Greek; and the more ideally Jewish he is in his devotion to Torah, the more profoundly Greek he is.

BIALIK's hint (and it *is* only a hint; a hunch; an imaginative construct; an invention; a fiction) is this: as with Greece, so with the Enlightenment.

The new alternative that lies before us now, astonishing in its daring and seeming insurmountability, is the fusion of the offerings of the Enlightenment—which, in any case, we cannot avoid, forgo, or escape—with Jewish primacy. If the opportunity is set aside—and for two hundred years it has, by and large, been set aside, or at least not been seized in all its potency and heat—the result will be either loss or triviality. The loss we have already glimpsed: the ennui that follows the swallowing-up by the aftermath of the Enlightenment. It is true enough that many Jewish writers and intellectuals (in whatever language they write, including Hebrew) prefer the swallowing-up and have chosen it. They may prefer it, they may freely choose it; but what they may *not* do is delude themselves that they are choosing largeness over narrowness, dissent over establishmentarianism, originality over tedium. In fact they are choosing precisely the opposite: the trodden path and the greased pole. In the name of the Enlightenment cry of "universalism," they are the herd choosing the herd. And triviality: there is small invitation to distinctiveness in that blending, and smaller opportunity for genius along the greased pole. Heine and Disraeli discovered this, and responded by roughing up the pole with ironic Jewish romanticism.

The other way—the new alternative, the high muse of fusion, Bialik's hint, the dream delivered up in shadowy shapes by the later writers of the Haskalah movement and by the feverish lost tide of Yiddish—opens out to riches: originality, the brilliance of the unexpected, the explosive hope of fresh form. Only genius can conceive it—and it may require several geniuses, or, to put it otherwise, a collective genius developed over generations. It took generations—a handful of centuries—for the Socratic emphasis on pedagogic exertion to infiltrate the Jewish emphasis on divinely authored communal responsibility. Undoubtedly it will take another handful of centuries—the two hundred that have elapsed so far are plainly not enough—for Enlightenment ideas of skepticism, originality, individuality, and the assertiveness of the free imagination to leach into what we might call the Jewish language of restraint, sobriety, collective conscience, moral seriousness.* Such a hugely combining project is the work not only of generations, but of giants. It will require fifty Bialiks, each one resplendent with the force of halakhic reverence for the minutiae of conscientiousness. "But where is *duty*?" Bialik cried into the enchanting face of love and poetry.

Such a project cannot be answered with a proposal to "compose midrashim," by which is usually meant a literature of parable. Surely a literature of parable is not to be despised: Kafka is its practitioner, and so is Borges. But dependence on a

* The distinguished Israeli critic Dan Miron has argued that the idea of a Jewish "moral seriousness" is itself an Enlightenment development, and that traditionally it was beside the point whether one was or was not morally serious; what mattered was that one performed what was religiously requisite in Jewish law. I am persuaded that he is right about the notion of moral seriousness having gained ascendancy post-Enlightenment, as one of the consequences of the diminution of tradition; but this certainly cannot mean that it is not present *at all* in the tradition, beginning with the appearance of the ram in the thicket. Moral seriousness, it seems to me, is endemic in Jewish particularity, and what characterizes moral seriousness as a wholly Enlightenment idea is precisely its severance from Jewish particularity.

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single form, however majestic or pliant, is no foundation for an entire literature; and what we are confronting, in a time of empty bewilderment, is just that: the need for a literature.

Nor will such a project be answered by any theory of an indispensable language, such as my old fantasy of New Yiddish—i.e., the Judaization of a single language used by large populations of Jews. The enrichment of any existing language is of course also not to be despised, and if English is broadened through the introduction of Jewish concepts, mores, sensibility, and terminology (the last the most prevalent and influential and yet the most trivial), that can only be its good fortune. English has already had the historic good luck (derived from historic bad luck—many invasions) to be richer than other languages. English, in fact, is perhaps the luckiest language with regard to "richness," and we English speakers are, as writer-technicians, probably the luckiest language-inhabitors, simply because English is really two languages, Germanic and Latinic: so that there are at least two strains of nuance for every noun, fact, feeling, or thought, and every notion owns a double face.

Hebrew is a lucky language in another sense: it was the original vessel for the revolution in human conscience, teaching the other languages what it early and painfully acquired: moral seriousness. Because of the power of scriptural ideas, there is hardly a language left on the planet that does not, through the use of its own syllables and vocabulary, "speak Hebrew." All languages have this Hebrew-speaking capacity, as the literatures of the world have somewhat tentatively, yet often honorably, demonstrated. If this is true, it is a proof that Hebrew does not have a unique ability, by divine right, so to say, to carry certain ideas, although the genius of Abraham and Moses and the Prophets runs like mother's milk through its lips. Language is the wineskin, thought the wine. All that is required of any language for it to carry a fresh or revolutionary idea (and what, in the history of humankind, is the Jewish recoil from idolatrous celebration, if not always fresh and always revolutionary?)—all that is required is for the language in question to will itself not to be parochial.

So IF the hope of a saving midrashic form is not enough, and if the chimera of a New Yiddish is, at bottom, beside the point, what can answer to Bialik's hint? What is the alternative to *be*, this unimaginable fusion of what we are as the children of the Enlightenment, what we are as the children of Israel, and what we are to become when these learn to commingle? That they *will* learn to commingle is, I believe, an inevitability; just as, with the hindsight of two millennia, we can see how inevitable it was for the Greek schools of philosophy to be reborn as the Jewish academies, and for Socratic *pilpul* to serve Jewish moral seriousness.

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Teacher Politics

Chester E. Finn, Jr.

THE political activism of America's two major teachers' unions is well known. The National Education Association (NEA), with 1.6 million members, and the American Federation of Teachers (AFT), now numbering 600,000, are among the largest, best organized, and most energetic interest groups in the United States. As campaign consultant Matt Reese once observed, "Teachers are the ideal political organization. They're in every precinct." Moreover, they are generally well-educated, likely to vote, mindful of public affairs, articulate, and possessed of ample spare time. All that this long-slumbering political giant needed was to be awakened, a process that commenced within the AFT during the 1960's and within the NEA in the early 70's.

Teacher-backed candidates sometimes lose. The most celebrated defeat, of course, was Jimmy Carter's political erasure by Ronald Reagan despite fierce NEA support of and moderate AFT enthusiasm for Carter. But the teachers' choices more often win. Even after discounting for such canny tactics as betting on a number of candidates who are sure to triumph, and claiming credit for some victories in which teacher support actually made little or no difference, the electoral influence of the AFT and the NEA remains a force to conjure with, if not so strong a force as they would have us think.

NEA and AFT support and endorsements nearly always go to the Democratic candidate in a general election. The same cannot be said for the votes of individual teachers. A quarter of all public-school teachers—and nearly two-fifths of those with any party affiliation—describe themselves as Republicans, and exit polls in 1980 showed that more teachers voted for Reagan-Bush than for Carter-Mondale. But while rank-and-file members display political attitudes and voting behaviors that resemble those of their neighbors, the national unions and most of their state affiliates are firmly in the Democratic camp, except when an occasional Republican "friend of education" gains their support for his incumbency, as Senators Stafford and Weicker did from the NEA (but not the AFT) in 1982. Of course this means that victorious Republicans rarely owe any debts or favors to the teachers' unions, and that Republican platforms and legislative programs now pay little heed to teacher interests. Insofar as those interests are thought by candidates and officials to be identical with the well-being of American education, we will tend to see education labeled as a "Democratic concern" rather than as an integral part of the culture and the society, which in turn will foster the further politicization along partisan lines of major educational policy decisions at the state and national level.

The teachers' unions, however, do not confine themselves to education issues. In fact, the successful schooling of children has steadily receded in the universe of NEA concerns. While it shines far brighter in the AFT cosmos, it would be as inaccurate to describe the politics and policies of either union primarily in educational terms as to characterize either one as a "professional organization of teachers"—something that the AFT never called itself, but that the NEA used for many years to veil its transformation into a militant public-employees' union.

In view of the breadth and diversity of the issues, domestic and international, educational and noneducational, that now suffuse both groups, one can reasonably ask what they stand for, how they define the culture, perceive the society, and view the nation's role in the world. This would be a significant question even if the only power of the teachers' unions were electoral. It becomes infinitely more consequential when we consider that their members also wield what is left of the moral power and intellectual authority that virtually all the world's civilizations have ceded to those in whose trust they place the education of the young. When that implicit moral power of the teacher is joined to the explicit political force of a major national organization, it is important to understand the ideological foundations. And these, one quickly learns, differ markedly between the two major teachers' unions, notwithstanding their outward similarities. Both the NEA and the AFT are ambitious, aggressive, and fiercely competitive unions with all the trappings, admirable and otherwise, of such organizations. But there the likenesses cease and the differences begin, both in their pronounce-

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ments and actions on national affairs and in the curricular and pedagogical guidance that they give teachers.

At a time when many Americans are understandably alarmed by the slipshod quality of their children's education, we might fairly expect the major teachers' organizations to respond, perhaps even to take the lead in raising school standards, stiffening the curriculum, and insisting on stronger student achievement. Self-interest alone should dictate this, as it is clear that taxpayers will not spend more for unsatisfactory schools, nor will parents who can find alternatives willingly leave their children in them. With enrollments shrinking as a result of demographic changes, teaching jobs in most fields are already scarce, and any large-scale exodus to private schools (which are rarely unionized) or to home instruction would palpably worsen the situation. With teacher salaries much the largest item in school budgets, and exquisitely sensitive to voter action on bond issues, levies, and tax-limitation initiatives, concern for the "bread-and-butter" issues that have been the real strength of the teachers' unions would also seem to dictate close attention to educational quality, if only to persuade the voting public that schools offer value for money.

At one time, the National Education Association conscientiously assumed such responsibilities. When it invited Charles W. Eliot and Nicholas Murray Butler to convene the Committee on Secondary School Studies in 1892, it was responding to the wholesale confusion, curricular disarray, and variegated standards that marked American high-school education at the time. And the result, after barely a year of intensive work by dozens of the nation's most distinguished educators, was a report on curriculum and teacher preparation that for a quarter-century served as the premier national standard by which schools and school systems evaluated their own policies. It was a high, even unbending, standard that was as firm toward teachers and the institutions that prepare them as toward the curricula and students in their schools.

In recent years, however, the National Education Association and its subdivisions have taken almost precisely the opposite approach to matters of educational quality. Their response has been, first, to discredit the evidence of qualitative deterioration and the means of acquiring such evidence; second, to savage the critics of school quality; third, to mount elaborate campaigns to persuade the public that American education is basically fine, and that any minor problems would be solved by the application of more money; fourth, steadfastly to refuse to let teachers be rewarded (or penalized) on the basis of their own, their pupils', or their schools' performance; fifth, to seek control of the agencies and processes by which standards are set for students and teachers alike; and, sixth, skillfully to employ the rhetoric of educational quality and excellence in advocating policies that would bring about nothing of the sort.

For all their shortcomings, tests and test results are the surest and most objective indicators of whether youngsters are learning what they should. And most of the results of most of the tests given to American students over the past decade and a half show with painful clarity that overall pupil performance is inadequate and worsening. The long decline in Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) scores is merely the best known. After an extensive review for the *Public Interest* of virtually all the available evidence on educational attainment, Barbara Lerner accurately concluded that, while youngsters in the first four grades have held their own, the achievement decline in grades five through twelve is large and irrefutable. Moreover, when American students were compared with their counterparts in other lands on 19 different tests, Lerner found, "[W]e were never ranked first or second; we came in last three times and, if comparisons are limited to other developed nations only, the U.S. ranked at the bottom seven times. . . ."

The evidence, in sum, is conclusive. But of course it bears attention only if one accepts the validity of tests and testing. The National Education Association, in the main, does not. In the late 1970's, it declared war on standardized testing—the only kind that permits comparisons to be made among children, schools, states, generations of pupils, or nations. Terry Herndon, who is about to step down after ten eventful years as executive director of the NEA, compared the Educational Testing Service (which administers the SAT and other college and graduate-school entrance examinations) to "armament manufacturers," and —perhaps mirroring the close collaboration on this issue between his organization and Ralph Nader— informed the 1979 NEA convention that "Standardized tests maim in equally harsh ways more people than do Detroit cars."

The NEA's anti-testing campaign continues today in the media, in the corridors of Congress and state legislatures (which can discourage and discredit testing, while escalating its cost, through so-called "truth in testing" statutes), and in gatherings of educators.

The association's speeches, testimony, and advertisements are often ingenious, replete with photographs of tearful six-year-olds—allegedly branded "below average" by their first standardized tests—and bright-eyed high-school students whose college and career prospects are being blighted by examinations. They are aimed primarily at parents, who naturally seek to maximize their children's opportunities, and at minority groups and others apt to resonate to the suggestion that tests foster inequality. "Intelligence, aptitude, and achievement tests," states an NEA resolution, "have historically been used to differentiate rather than to measure performance and have, therefore, prevented equal educational opportunities for all students, particularly

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minorities, lower socioeconomic groups, and women." Hence tests should not be administered when they are "biased," which word is left entirely undefined, or when they are "potentially damaging to a student's self-concept," which potential naturally dwells in every imaginable test, achievement measure, or assessment. The NEA also rejects the use of any test to "compare individual schools or teachers," or as "a basis for monetary remuneration or promotions." Though teachers are encouraged to devise quizzes and tests for use with their own students, no one outside the individual classroom should be permitted to impose such measures, or to do anything with—or about—their results.

The AFT thinks otherwise. Indeed, his union "strongly supports testing," wrote AFT president Albert Shanker in the Washington *Post* in 1980. "We believe that tests tell us things that are important for students, parents, teachers, colleges, government, and the society at large to know. We also believe the public unquestionably has a right to know what we are doing in the schools—how well or how badly."

Available evidence suggests that a majority of individual teachers share Shanker's view. The NEA's own poll in 1980 showed that half or more of all teachers deemed standardized achievement tests to be appropriate for evaluating school effectiveness, as the "primary measure of student learning," and for determining pupil promotion, while three-quarters would also use such tests to help evaluate curriculum and to track or group students.

The NEA's assault on the legitimacy of tests and the utility of testing naturally extends to examinations devised to appraise teacher qualifications, too. Eighteen states now administer, or are preparing, systematic assessments of individual competence prior to awarding teaching certificates. Some use the National Teachers Examination, developed by the Educational Testing Service. Others have devised their own measures, as have a few large city school systems. This widening movement contrasts sharply with the historic pattern of licensing anyone who graduates from an "approved" teacher-education program or who can display a prescribed list of courses on his college transcript. The change results partly from the slackening demand for new teachers, which permits greater selectivity than was possible when pupil enrollments were soaring, but even more from mounting national alarm about the deteriorating intellectual caliber of such teachers, now drawn increasingly from the bottom quarter of college classes that may be no great shakes even in their higher elevations.

Although a legitimate debate persists about the utility of paper-and-pencil tests as a means of gauging the *skills* that teachers use in the classroom, there is no doubt that such examinations can assess the breadth of a teacher's general education and the depth of his knowledge of the particular subjects he will teach. But here, too, the NEA has elected to stonewall, while the AFT has solidly endorsed the concept of testing new teachers before putting them in front of students. A resolution adopted at the NEA convention states that "[E]xaminations such as the National Teachers Examination must not be used as a condition of employment, evaluation, [or as a] criterion for certification, placement, or promotion of teachers." But the AFT, Shanker says, "would *like* to see the testing of all new teachers before they are hired, a far from universal practice at present. . . . Why not begin now to insure at least minimal qualifications . . . through universal entry tests?"

THE NEA is not so naive as to suppose that public concern with teacher quality can be entirely shrugged off. And so, after several years of effort and internal dissension, it came forth in late 1982 with a 64-page "action plan" to promote "excellence in our schools" through teacher education, primarily by spelling out dozens of criteria for college programs in teacher preparation. This is a useful document, as far as it goes, but that is not very far. As noted by Virginia Robinson, the editor of a respected newsletter called *Education Times*: "Missing from the NEA position paper . . . is any attempt to assess existing teacher-education programs. . . . [It] does not address one of the most troublesome problems currently plaguing teacher education—the evidently poor academic qualifications of teacher candidates. . . . There is no mention of test scores—on which current teacher candidates apparently rank well below entrants to most other professional preparations. . . ."

Tucked away in the recommendations, however, is another cardinal tenet of the NEA, namely, that it should control all teacher training and employment via the establishment within each state of an "autonomous agency" that would be "governed by a majority of teachers who are members of the majority national teachers' organization, to approve teacher-preparation programs and certificate prospective teachers." This derives from the NEA's long-standing assertion that "the profession must govern itself" and is of course consistent with the approach of doctors and lawyers to their own professions. In righteously advancing such policies, the NEA benefits enormously from its prior status as a professional association rather than a labor union (as it is now officially designated by both the Labor Department and the Internal Revenue Service). But it is questionable how far society should go in permitting a public-employees' union, which has won exclusive bargaining rights and compulsory dues in many jurisdictions, which insists on (and not infrequently practices) the right to strike, and which demands permanent tenure for any teacher with more than three years' experience, also to control the terms and procedures by which the state determines individual qualifications to enter the classroom in the first place, particularly at a time when student achievement and teacher quality are both declining and when the NEA denies the legitimacy of the primary indicators of those declines.

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Tests are not the only villains in the NEA's account of what is right and what is wrong with American education. The standards that underlie "standardized" tests are themselves held to be invalid. Because every child (and every teacher) is unique, the reasoning goes, it is unfair to force him into any kind of mold. Because educational aspirations and career plans differ, it is wrong to make everyone leap the same hurdles. Because minority groups may be disadvantaged by standards devised by the "majority," all such standards are immoral, illegal, and probably unconstitutional. And because fulfilling any set of "minimum standards" will tend to become the foremost objective of schooling, the minimum may become a ceiling, thereby blocking the achievement of true excellence.

Each of these assertions has a long and sometimes honorable tradition that dates back to the earliest days of formal education. Each is capable of evoking nods of agreement from parents and murmurs of approval from teachers. But when applied to schools and children, at least in the forms in which these principles have been most widely practiced in the past two decades, each is also a warrant for educational mediocrity. Of the many critics and commentators who have pointed this out, few are more perceptive than the AFT's Shanker, whose weekly New York *Times* column (run as a paid advertisement) is regularly used for thoughtful exhortations to higher school standards and for summaries of research findings on school effectiveness, and whose union resolutions and publications bespeak seriousness of purpose about the development of student skills and character, curriculum content, and measurable achievement. Whether one views Shanker as an educational statesman or as the crafty guardian-nurturer of a goose that lays golden eggs, a public school run according to his lights would probably be a better school than most children attend today.*

The NEA, however, is reasonably satisfied with the educational system the way it is, save perhaps for insufficient funding. That, at least, is what it would have us believe. To encourage such thinking, the association has engaged the services of the J. Walter Thompson advertising agency and embarked on a major national public-relations campaign on behalf of "American education." This has included full-page ads in general-circulation magazines such as *Newsweek*, and extended commercials on network television. Furthermore, when skeptical journalists inquire about educational problems, the NEA tends to deny that they are serious. The Washington *Post* recently ran a thoughtful, three-part series on illiteracy by Joanne Omang. "Prominent among the nonbelievers," she reported, "is the National Education Association. . . . 'The problem is not nearly as great as some people claim,' said Don Cameron, NEA's assistant executive director. '[T]he tendency is to stress the 15 percent of students who do poorly over the 85 percent who do well.' "

EVEN while denying the existence of significant shortcomings, discrediting educational standards, and disavowing the surest means of enforcing them, the NEA leadership is much too adroit not to recognize the need for a more satisfying explanation to the public and, especially, to its own members, of why so many people are disgruntled about the quality of American education. And the chosen explanation is shrewd indeed. Evil people, one learns, are saying bad things about schools and teachers in order to further their own unsavory ends: the destruction of public education; the oppression of minorities, the poor, and the dispossessed; the transfer of resources into less worthy purposes (including, especially, the arms race); and the victory of reactionary social policies and political objectives over progressive goals.

The Reagan administration and its budget priorities have become the chief scapegoats, but assuredly not the only ones. "In recent months," NEA president Willard H. McGuire proclaimed in his opening address to the 1982 convention in Los Angeles, "the education profession has seen an unprecedented attack on public education. The attackers assault our schools, burn our books, deny funding and even loans to our students, defame our system, and attack educators directly." In case the martial imagery were not clear enough to the 7,000 delegates, McGuire returned to it later in the proceedings: "It's been said of America that every generation must fight a war to preserve its freedom. I submit that we are in a war today," he said. "It is not a war on foreign soil, but a war that is taking place in every schoolroom and in every state capital and in every congressional district. It is a war for the survival of public education."

This was strong talk for a convention dominated by disarmament resolutions, anti-war rallies, and anti-nuclear addresses, but the contemporary NEA leadership seems less diffident about targeting enemies when they are Americans. "When school opens this fall," McGuire explained, "many of our colleagues won't be there because of the Reagan budget cuts. Many of our children will come to school hungry because of the Reagan budget cuts. . . . There are citizens and special-interest groups who would destroy our public schools, and in the Presidency of Ronald Reagan, they have found an agent. . . ."

The NEA's attack on these "groups" and their "agent" is shrill, well-coordinated, and sustained, notwithstanding McGuire's bland assertion that "[w]e refuse to emulate our critics. We will continue to appeal to the more charitable and more sensible instincts of the American public."

There is little charity to be found in a 292-page "workshop-resource book" published by the NEA

* Unfortunately, his educational vision has a large blind spot when it comes to private schools, which the AFT—here in complete accord with the NEA—regards as a threat and spares no effort to bar from educational legitimacy, social approbation, and governmental funds.

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in 1981 to assist teachers with "survival-skills training . . . in countering the attacks on public education by the conglomerates of the radical Right." But there are long lists of individuals, groups, and organizations said to be devoted to "the goal of putting into place their own economic and political agenda for the nation—an agenda that would escalate military expenditures and erase most of the social and educational advances of the past generation." With a fine lack of concern for ideological nuance and policy focus, the lists run from tax-limitation groups to gun-owners' associations, from the Moral Majority to the Council for a Union-free Environment, from the Heritage Foundation to the Coalition for Peace through Strength, from the Eagle Forum to the Hoover Institution, from the International Center for Economic Policy Studies to the John Birch Society.

The single most striking characteristic of the lists is how little most of the named organizations have to do with elementary and secondary education. For in reality, apart from a handful of education specialists at such places as the National Right to Work Committee and the Heritage Foundation, the Right pays much less attention to the NEA than Herndon and his associates would have the rank-and-file believe. Far more biting criticism has come in recent months from such inconvenient quarters as the *Reader's Digest*, the *New Republic*, and the *Washington Monthly*. Even mainstream educators such as the respected dean of the Stanford School of Education, J. Myron Atkin, and Scott Thomson, executive director of the National Association of Secondary School Principals, have begun to voice their displeasure. "The NEA," writes Thomson in the widely-read educators' journal *Phi Delta Kappan*, for example, "no longer contributes significantly to the improvement of teaching and learning for students. It looks after the narrow interests of its members rather than after the broader interests of its constituency."

FACED with such open peer criticism, the NEA naturally needs a larger cause around which to rally its members, each of whom pays several hundred dollars a year to belong to the national, state, and local associations (for which one receives few direct benefits other than group-liability insurance), and it needs a convincing rationale to elicit from teachers the additional millions in Political Action Committee contributions that form the fiscal foundation of its political edifice. Ronald Reagan's "war" on federal school aid and the New Right's alleged assault on education itself meet these needs quite satisfactorily.

Though the federal government's role in elementary and secondary education is marginal, having furnished only eight cents of the school dollar even at its peak, Washington has been the NEA's political and policy focus since the mid-60's. And there has not been a single significant national candidate, issue, or congressional vote bearing on education on which the NEA has taken the side of caution, decentralization, diversity, or deregulation. Rather, it has systematically sought to extend the reach and augment the power of all three branches of the federal government. The NEA favors compulsory busing, the vigorous enforcement of affirmative-action quotas, bilingual education that "uses a student's primary language as the principal medium of instruction in a bicultural setting," and exacting federal requirements for the education of handicapped youngsters. It has endorsed virtually every one of the dozens of "categorical" programs —from metric education to women's education to small-business-management education to career education—that have cluttered up the federal statute books, bureaucratized the nation's school systems, and homogenized the curriculum in recent years, and it has bitterly opposed "block grants," program consolidations, and any restoration of authority to state and local governments.

The NEA's two great—and interwoven—goals have been the establishment of a Cabinet-level Department of Education and the boosting of federal spending on education to one-third of the nation's total public-school budget. The first of these was achieved in 1979, when the Carter administration dutifully kept the promise that the President had made to the NEA in return for its 1976 election endorsement and pushed through Congress the legislation establishing the Cabinet agency, despite the misgivings of some of his own advisers and the opposition of many other education groups, including the American Federation of Teachers. The second goal, which would add about $25 billion to the federal budget, is far from realization, and likely to stay that way for some time to come. Indeed, few people outside NEA Washington headquarters even take it seriously. But the preservation of existing federal funds and programs from attack is a satisfactory replacement on the NEA's political agenda. And the maladroit education policies of the Reagan administration have helped the NEA to reshape its image from promoter of big government and federal intervention to a defender of the public schools themselves.

During the Carter years, the NEA tended to isolate itself from the school-board associations, the principals' associations, and other moderate education groups, from most of the rest of organized labor, and from such exponents of liberal opinion as the editorial page of the Washington *Post*. It was too greedy, its federal-policy agenda too interventionist, and its quest for political power too brazen. The Reagan administration has almost singlehandedly ended that isolation through its lack of evident interest in public education, the sharp reductions it has sought in existing school-aid programs, its parallel willingness to succor private schools, its uneven handling of civil-rights policy,* and its support for several New Right educational causes, particularly classroom prayer.

* See my article, "'Affirmative Action' Under Reagan," COMMENTARY, April 1982.

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It has thereby unified the education community more solidly than anything since Richard Nixon's vetoes of congressional school-aid appropriations, has strengthened the links among education, labor, and civil-rights organizations, and has enormously improved relations between that coalition and many journalists, academics, and Democratic politicians. Even the AFT has buried the hatchet with the NEA for purposes of salvaging federal school-aid programs, combating tuition tax credits and—remarkably—preserving the Department of Education. The enemy of his enemy, Shanker recognizes, must be his ally, at least in the battles over federal education policy being fought on Capitol Hill.

Such alliances of convenience do not, however, represent a significant narrowing of the ideological chasm between the NEA and the AFT or, for that matter, between the NEA and the political culture of most Americans.

A reasonable facsimile of any organization's political ethos can usually be glimpsed in the rules and procedures by which it governs itself. The National Education Association proudly and openly organizes its own governing bodies and staffing patterns around racial and ethnic quotas. The bylaws state: "It is the policy of the association to achieve ethnic-minority delegate representation at least equal to the proportion of identified ethnic-minority populations within the state." Any affiliate that fails to gain executive approval of its plan "to achieve a total state and local delegation . . . which reflects these ethnic-minority proportions" risks being denied the right to participate in the annual convention (except to vote for national officers and dues increases!).

Color-consciousness also governs election of directors and top association leadership. The NEA constitution stipulates that "members from ethnic minorities shall comprise at least 20 percent of the board," a quota that must be met even if it is necessary for the annual convention to elect *additional* directors "to assure such ethnic-minority representation." Each state delegation on the national board must likewise meet a quota; if the first three directors from a particular state "do not include at least one ethnic-minority person," a fourth shall be elected "who is from an ethnic-minority group."

For uninhibited attentiveness to race, however, it is difficult to improve upon the practice of the NEA, at its annual presentation of "human and civil-rights awards," of identifying recipients by their color in the printed program of the ceremony itself.

Not surprisingly, the NEA envisions a society in which other institutions are organized along similar lines. This is manifest in its policy resolutions and other public statements, which exhibit none of the usual confusion about goals and quotas, or any misgivings about reverse discrimination. "It may be necessary," resolution E-13 states bluntly, for employers "to give preference in the recruitment, hiring, retention, and promotion policies to certain racial groups or women or men to overcome past discrimination." Nor are race, color, religion, and gender the only characteristics that warrant protection. The current list also includes "residence, physical disability, political activities, professional-association activity, age, marital status, family relationship, sex and sexual orientation." And the personnel decisions that must be protected from all such discrimination include those under which a person is "employed, retained, paid, dismissed, suspended, demoted, transferred, or retired." In fact, the only quotas explicitly frowned upon in NEA resolutions are "tenure quotas."

Because declining school enrollments and budget constraints are shrinking the nation's overall teaching force, the NEA has sought to give special protection to minority-group members when layoffs and reductions-in-force are carried out by school systems. The contract it negotiated in South Bend, Indiana, for example, states baldly that "No minority bargaining unit employee shall be laid off."

Such practices clash sharply with the time-honored union doctrine of seniority, and have produced a particularly vigorous dispute between the NEA and the AFT, which adheres to that doctrine in particular, and has opposed race-based employment practices and quotas in general.

Whatever one may think of teacher seniority as an educational policy, it is preferable to racialism as a social policy. In this, as in its overall view of the proper ordering of the democracy, the American Federation of Teachers resists the classification of individuals according to outward characteristics and group identities, both in its own actions and in the actions of others. The AFT's commitment to nondiscrimination is long-standing, firm, and sincere—it abolished "dual" (black and white) affiliates at the state and local level well before the NEA, and 7 of its 34 current executive-council members are black, while 11 are women—but it is a commitment to individual opportunity, not to group quotas and reverse discrimination. The pertinent AFT resolution "reject[s] quota policies which violate the very meaning of 'equal protection' by prescribing remedies for discrimination that are themselves discriminatory." The same view animates Shanker's frequent columns and forceful speeches on federal affirmative-action mandates, Office for Civil Rights regulations, and Supreme Court decisions. And it permeates the AFT's view of what children should be taught in school, the language in which they should be taught, and the values that should undergird their education.

The NEA, by contrast, would fragment schooling itself along racial and ethnic lines. Bilingual education is only the beginning. Almost every imaginable minority group is the subject of an NEA resolution calling for special attention to its "heritage and culture" in the cur-

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riculum, for various forms of "self-determination" in educational policy-making (and often in general governance) for the affected group, for community or parental control of its children's schools, and for classroom instruction by teachers of similar backgrounds.

What is missing, of course, is any clear recognition of a common American culture, nationhood, or polity. This lack of an anchor not infrequently causes the NEA to get caught in some treacherous currents when it seeks to give specific guidance to classroom teachers. One example may be seen in a 1977 volume entitled *Cross-Cultural Education* which the NEA still distributes as part of its extensive curriculum library. Here, and in similar publications, one encounters a far clearer and more purposeful ideology than the bland "pluralism" that pervades the association's public statements and resolutions. One encounters the unmistakable hint that American social, political, and economic values are, in a word, evil.

How else is one to view the statement in this volume that "Americans have allowed a national climate of prejudice, hate, racism, and sexism to grow"?

How else is one to interpret a suggested interdisciplinary unit on "the recent oil embargo in West Asia and its international sociopolitical consequences" in which these topics for discussions are proposed to the teaching team?:

> The economics class might address the nomenclature of the international economic system, exploring how it is possible that a few Western nations control the flow of goods and services around the world. A mode of inquiry might center around the statement that three million whites in Africa enjoy a very high standard of living, while fifteen million blacks on the same continent exist essentially in economic slavery. The language-arts class might explore the reasons why English is the international language or examine the influence of English in promulgating European values and attitudes among non-European nations. . . . The political-science class might explore the sociopolitical impact of the oil embargo on American multinational corporations operating in newly decolonized countries such as Angola and Mozambique.

Lest any teacher be troubled by the discrepancy between the implicit world view encountered here and the ideas that he may have come upon elsewhere, *Cross-Cultural Education* offers reassurance. A chapter entitled "So-Called Liberals and So-Called Intellectuals" explains who is and is not to be trusted: "Organizational efforts to address manifestations of dehumanization have been effectively resisted, and in too many instances, completely stifled—not by the so-called racists, but by the so-called liberals and the so-called intellectuals. . . . [B]oth types have special destructive potentials for negating polycultural efforts." The worrisome potential of the "so-called liberals" is their propensity to engage in "complex behaviors" that have, at their roots, the "psychology of racism." Such behaviors include a tendency to defer action on one problem until an antecedent condition is alleviated, and to engage in "the well-known liberal ploy, divide-and-conquer," which amounts to fostering "certain conditions that set one oppressed ethnocultural group against another."

As for the "so-called intellectuals," their cardinal sin is to "obscure major issues affecting the progress of oppressed ethnocultural groups" and thereby "to prolong any decision-making process that could facilitate the achievement of humanistic equity." The solitary example given is the practice of using data attesting to increased minority enrollment in college "to support the distorted contention of some liberals and intellectuals that competence via educational preparation assures equitable upward mobility." A remarkable statement in any situation, but truly striking when published under the imprimatur of the National Education Association, even when accompanied by the standard disclaimer of responsibility for the contents. The man who wrote *Cross-Cultural Education*, it may be noted, was identified as Associate Superintendent of the Minneapolis Public Schools.

One wants to avoid recklessness in attributing motives and affixing political labels, but in reflecting upon the many societies that at one time or another have encouraged their teachers and students to view the world through lenses such as these, it is difficult to identify a single one that could accurately be termed democratic. Certainly this interpretation of the role of ideas and intellectuals within a political culture ill-becomes an organization whose principal criticism of its own perceived antagonists is the threat they purportedly pose to academic freedom.

The steadiest flow of such material into the NEA circulation system comes from an organization called the Council on Interracial Books for Children (CIBC), which is not part of the NEA but which has co-sponsored several individual projects with it, which received an NEA "Human and Civil-Rights Special Award" in 1982, and which is listed in the NEA "yellow pages" of useful resources for teachers.

One such venture was the preparation by CIBC, in conjunction with the National and Connecticut Education Associations, of a kit of teacher materials about the Ku Klux Klan. The purpose was certainly laudable, and many of the materials are informative and useful, but the interpretation leaves something to be desired. "[I]t is important to remember," the authors caution, "that the Klan is only the tip of the iceberg, the most visible and obvious manifestation of the entrenched racism in our society."

The Anti-Defamation League (ADL) termed this approach "disturbing and troublesome," and pointed out that "racist ideas, contrary to the NEA's basic theme, are antithetical to most Americans today. The nation's thrust is to achieve racial

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equality, undo past wrongs, and insure the growth of freedom."

The AFT's Shanker echoed the ADL's concern in his column. "Why aren't all the facts given to the students so that they can arrive at conclusions for themselves?" he asked. "Should students leave the classroom filled with shame about what America once was—and without any sense of pride in what it is now and is trying to be?"

But the NEA is undaunted. It continues to distribute *Violence, the Ku Klux Klan, and the Struggle for Equality* through its "professional library" for $4.95 a copy, and its December 1982 newsletter announced that sales had topped 13,000 copies, indicating "that teachers nationwide are using this curriculum resource."

The joint ventures of the NEA and the Council on Interracial Books for Children are not confined to the Klan, or indeed to the detection and elimination of racism. Another combined project was a 1981 report on romantic novels aimed at the preteen and teen-age markets. That many such books are dreadful scarcely bears repeating. What is noteworthy, however, are the assumptions underlying the criticisms proffered by the NEA and the CIBC. The stated objective of the exercise, of course, was to "eliminate bias" from children's books. But it turns out that among the prominent varieties of bias of which many such books are culpable is a disposition to favor heterosexual love. In one of the briefer articles in the report, a self-described "adult lesbian" observes that "No romance novel ever gave me the slightest hint that girls (and women) could, and did, stay together.... Fortunately, I eventually escaped from the entrapment of these novels. I am concerned that the adolescent years of those who may be gay or lesbian and are now reading these 'happiness package' novels will be made far more difficult than necessary."

The other forms of "bias" that the CIBC excoriates in its regular bulletin and miscellaneous publications are numerous, pervasive, and occasionally inventive. Criticisms range from "stereotypes in amusement parks" to an attack on *Sesame Street*. But some of them are unfunny. In an adulatory review of a new Harper & Row children's novel about a fourteen-year-old Puerto Rican "street punk" in New York, for example, the youthful protagonist is hailed for being a "hustler with morals" (who "hustles a full meal from a sympathetic waitress but leaves her a large tip, explaining 'I'm broke for restaurants, not people' "). More remarkable still, we are asked to admire the book's portrayal of the lad's father, who "is in Attica for having assaulted a policeman during a Puerto Rico independence day rally" which "suggests that he has a sense of self-respect and self-determination."

Such materials are a long way from bland convention resolutions in support of federal aid for bilingual education, but they partake of essentially the same view of American society, of the role of education in that society, and of the teacher's responsibilities. The NEA and the organizations with which it cooperates would have children absorb the same values and beliefs that permeate its own governance system, its public-policy pronouncements, its lobbying efforts, its television and magazine advertisements, and the criteria by which it decides which candidates to support in state and national elections. Running throughout is an unstated but fairly coherent ideology familiar to all who have watched the evolution of radical political movements within the Western democracies during the past two decades. It includes the denial of nationhood; the celebration of individual and, especially, group differences; the substitution of color (and gender, ethnic, linguistic, etc.) consciousness for color-blindness; the delegitimization of all authority save that of the state; the purification and reconstruction of political institutions to make them more "responsive"; the gradual eclipse of liberty by equality; the defaming of economic structures and the ethos that sustains them; the creeping politicization of the culture; the degradation of traditional morality; the idealization of modernism and relativism in values, attitudes, and behavior; and the encouragement of citizens in general and children in particular to despise the rules and customs by which their society orders itself, including those that make it a functional (if imperfect) democracy.

It would be wrong to infer that the NEA harbors such an ideology at the level of organizational consciousness, and certainly it would be inaccurate to impute such views to American classroom teachers, 70 percent of whom describe their political philosophies as "conservative" or "tending" that way, and most of whom share the values and beliefs of their relatives and neighbors in every community in the land. But it is impossible to examine the policies, practices, and publications of the National Education Association without at least concluding that it has lost (or jettisoned) its anchor and is drifting rapidly into some well-charted but exceedingly dangerous waters. And probably carrying more than a few teachers and pupils with it.

The American Federation of Teachers, by contrast, is securely moored. A fair sampling of the educational and political values it seeks to impart can be found in the Winter 1982 issue of its journal, *American Educator*, which in recent years has emerged as one of the most solid of the innumerable periodicals aimed at schoolteachers. It contains six major articles. In one, the president of St. John's College urges restoration in the schools of "a traditional liberal-arts education—not just job training—which will provide a solid foundation for youngsters to become imaginative citizens prepared for the world of work and able to enjoy and contribute to society." Another celebrates the ability of the "great books" to rekindle teachers' "excitement about learning." A third, by philosopher Mortimer J. Adler, summarizes the boldest and most imaginative of the many recent commission

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reports on restructuring the curriculum and strengthening the pedagogy of American schools. The fourth is an essay-review by Judge Robert Bork of a recent history of key Supreme Court decisions and constitutional evolution. The fifth is a selection of material that teachers might use in teaching "honesty," this being the latest in a superb series on "traditional values" that previously addressed responsibility, courage, and compassion. Finally, there is a critical appraisal by Harold Isaacs of "myths" about the Chinese Cultural Revolution that are fostered by writers who fail to note "how many died, were shot, beaten, tortured, frozen, or starved to death during this ordeal."

This is not the first time that the American Federation of Teachers has chided those who romanticize the People's Republic of China. In 1977, Shanker sent an open letter to Dr. Mary Berry, then the Carter administration's senior education official (and today a member of the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights), who had recently returned from Peking and pronounced in a speech that "The whole relationship between the academy and the real world represents an area in which I believe we have much to learn from the Chinese." Shanker expressed his "shock" that "you have chosen to extol various aspects of Chinese education as models for us to emulate. . . . How . . . can you ignore that they are part of an educational system in which the highest purpose of learning is service to the state—in which the suppression of criticism and the screening for political opinion are major functions of the schools?"

BOTH national teachers' unions, it turns out, have what could fairly be termed "foreign policies," and these are sharply divergent. The AFT's world view closely resembles that of the AFL-CIO. It was forged in the political tradition of democratic socialism from which some key AFT leaders come, and toughened in the 1940's and 50's when the union forcefully (and painfully) expelled several locals with Stalinist leanings.

The AFT is quite active in foreign affairs, both on its own and through the AFL-CIO. Shanker currently serves as president of the International Federation of Free Teachers' Unions, the major world assembly of non-Communist teacher groups, which provides funds, technical assistance, and moral support to fledgling democratic unions in many countries.*

The AFT has also given vigorous moral and financial support to Poland's Solidarity union and to Soviet dissidents, many of whom it has publicly honored, invited to speak at its conventions, and publicized in its journals. Recent AFT speakers and human-rights award recipients include Alexander Ginzburg, Vladimir Bukovsky, and Yugoslav writer Mihajlo Mihajlov. Shanker helped organize the International Sakharov Hearings, provided office space in New York for a Solidarity spokesman, and frequently devotes his column to such issues as the plight of Cambodian refugees, the imprisonment of Huber Matos in Cuba, and the results of annual human-rights assessments by Freedom House and Amnesty International. *American Educator* and other AFT publications include critical accounts of human rights in Eastern Europe and Cuba, and of the parlous condition of democracy in Central America. Union policy resolutions are strongly supportive of Israel (and critical of the PLO), skeptical of a wide array of United Nations activities, and impatient with the United States government for its cautious responses to Soviet actions in Afghanistan and Poland. The union's general position on national defense is consistent with the AFL-CIO view that strength begets security and that domestic and defense spending must not be pitted against one another in budget decisions. As for nuclear weapons, the 1982 AFT convention called for a "mutual and verifiable freeze" but insisted that American arms reductions be "consistent with the maintenance of overall parity with the Soviet Union," and condemned Moscow for its military build-up.

The NEA's positions on most foreign-policy and defense issues are different both in detail and in spirit, as suggested by the association's unsmiling characterization of Shanker as a man "suspected of brushing his teeth with gunpowder." The arms-freeze position adopted at the 1982 NEA convention warmly endorsed the Kennedy-Hatfield nuclear-freeze proposal and called for a "complete halt in the nuclear-arms race." Part of the philosophical basis for that position can be seen in a paragraph on "education and national security" contained in the NEA's current statement of priorities for Congress:

> The security and well-being of our nation are enhanced by the pursuit of peace. The most effective guarantees of peace are a solid economy, a well-educated populace, and a stable world community. All efforts which detract from those guarantees shall be actively opposed. The goal of national security through peace can be achieved only by the education of the citizenry to compete and succeed in a complex and interdependent world. Therefore the proposed disproportionate allocation of funds increasing the national defense budget and decreasing federal funding for education must be reversed.

UP TO a point, the NEA's position on national defense reflects the familiar worry of any domestic interest group that each

* The NEA's international is the World Confederation of Organizations of the Teaching Profession (WCOTP), and it is largely outside the worldwide network of democratic labor activities and organizations with which most major American unions are affiliated. Although included in the celebrated *Ramparts* list of onetime CIA conduits, the WCOTP today has no very clear ideology, save a strong yearning for cooperation among all the world's teaching organizations, regardless of their politics or those of the regimes under which they exist. WCOTP does not currently include teacher groups from Warsaw Pact nations, however, though the Yugoslavian teachers are members.

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dollar spent by the military will be a dollar subtracted from its pet programs.* At times, however, one catches a whiff of something else, perhaps just the faintest suggestion that the clash of budget priorities can be turned to tactical advantage in the pursuit of ends that have little directly to do with domestic programs after all. Ronald Reagan has, of course, made such left-wing political craftsmanship more inviting and occasionally more gratifying, and in the hands of a master craftsman the results can be seductive indeed. One need only review Terry Herndon's remarkable National Press Club address in April 1982 (which Herbert Stein could well have used as the basis for his brilliant essay on "How World War III Was Lost"†):

> The President may speak of our social programs as "hungry stray pups" to be spurned, but I speak to him of war machines which he pets and feeds without limit as ravenous lions which must be tamed lest they consume us all. . . . [I]t is increasingly clear that we lack the food to both feed the hungry pup and sate the ravening lion. Yet, both within and beyond our borders, we see hungry children seeking food, destitute families seeking homes, ignorant masses seeking schools . . . while the Congress debates a budget which diminishes or threatens to eliminate nearly all of the relevant relief programs. . . . Is it not time to question "Why?" The answer is inescapable, it is proposed that we spend $1.6 trillion to achieve military superiority in five years. . . . [T]o build redundant weapons with dollars stripped from the millions of children served by Head Start or from the millions served by Title I, to install the MX system with money wrenched from the education of handicapped children and aspiring college students . . . is to sacrifice self-determination to reaction. . . . Our dependence on the implements of war seemingly threatens our will and our capacity to establish justice. . . . In this world the "common defense" is to be found only in the aggressive pursuit of peace. . . . We ring the globe with military installations because of the Soviets. We flood Europe with missiles because of the Soviets. . . . [O]ur government seems more responsive to the Soviet presence than to the needs of its own people or the needs of the desperate peoples of the world. . . . The omnipresent nuclear umbrella has not created jobs, filled bellies, ended oppression, or forestalled Soviet exploitation of human misery in the Third World. Moreover, aggressive arms supply and bellicose diplomacy did not arrest the creep of Marxism into Vietnam, Cuba, Nicaragua, El Salvador, or Afghanistan. Then why do we rely on these policies for future defense? It seems to me clear that, at home and abroad, we must instead compassionately attend to the promotion of justice and human rights; the encouragement of economic development; the provision of food, medicine, and schools; and the preservation of peace. . . .

Herndon is as energetic as he is loquacious, and in recent months he has pushed the "peace issue" to the top of the NEA's public-policy agenda (where it took the place of the defunct Equal Rights Amendment) and has assumed a major leadership role in forming new peace coalitions and organizations. He is president of a new umbrella group called Citizens Against Nuclear War, and provides it with office space in the NEA headquarters building in Washington. This coalition of 26 other groups—primarily civil-rights, religious, and environmentalist—has three specific objectives: negotiation of a bilateral nuclear-weapons freeze, cancellation of "irrational civil-defense programs for evacuation of American cities," and "observance of all previously negotiated international arms agreements," which is evidently meant to include SALT II.

THE salient characteristic of Citizens Against Nuclear War is that, while its laudable objective is "world peace," its governing principles speak only to American policy and to the responsibility for foreign policy of "the citizens of a democracy." Thus, "the U.S. must urgently seek international agreements to reduce the risk of war" and "U.S. policy should not be based on an effort to win or survive a nuclear war."

While the absence of any parallel admonitions to those who might make war on the United States could be mere oversight, and while it is reasonable to suppose that the primary concern of an American group will be the policies of its own government, this inattention to the policies and actions of adversary nations is nonetheless striking. But it is not unprecedented in the foreign-policy pronouncements of the NEA and the organizations with which it is affiliated. Although the resolutions adopted in 1982 include a mild statement of support for Solidarity, as recently as 1981 the reporter covering that year's NEA convention for the Communist party's *Daily World* (himself a New Jersey high-school teacher and convention delegate) could approvingly write that "Nowhere in the basic documents of NEA, in their resolutions or new business items, are there any anti-Soviet or anti-socialist positions."

Yet NEA convention proceedings and resolutions in both years contained multiple denunciations of various aspects of American foreign and defense policy, and admonitions to the government to change its ways. The current NEA legislative program, for example, calls upon Washington not to

* This position is sufficiently flexible, however, to permit the association to seek federal education funds in the *name* of national defense. In an action slightly reminiscent of the man who murdered his parents and then beseeched the judge for mercy on grounds that he was now an orphan, the NEA has endorsed the American Defense Education Act, which would, if enacted, provide funds to public schools for instruction in math, foreign languages, science, and the like. The NEA's statement noted, without intentional irony, that the program would "provide the necessary training programs . . . to answer the nation's needs for the maintenance and operation of weapons systems."

† *Wall Street Journal*, December 3, 1982.

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give military or economic assistance "to any foreign government which violates or permits the violation of the basic rights of its citizens." Well and good. But the next sentence states that "For example, NEA shall work for cessation of aid to the current administrations in Guatemala and El Salvador." No other examples are given. Certainly there is no suggestion that the United States might reconsider the various kinds of preferential treatment and indirect economic assistance that it gives to Warsaw Pact nations or, for that matter, to the Soviet Union itself. The government is similarly advised to refrain from any "overt or covert action that would destabilize Nicaragua," but no one is admonished to stop using poison gas in Afghanistan and Indochina or to refrain from destabilizing countries in Africa.

The NEA's generally uncritical stance toward Moscow occasionally yields domestic public-relations problems. This was particularly evident in 1978 when the association officially endorsed and recommended the television series *The Unknown War*. Much could be said about this twenty-hour cinematic treatment of World War II from the Soviet standpoint.* Tom Buckley termed it "soft-core propaganda." Shanker's column described it as a "whitewash of Stalin." Adrian Karatnycky and Alexander Motyl, writing in *Freedom at Issue*, called it a "disservice to the millions who suffered the ravages of both Nazism and Stalinism" and a "shameful model for the clichés and falsifications that animate the Soviet version of reality." The NEA's tepid response to these criticisms did not address the substance of these concerns at all. Rather, explained the association's spokesman, "The NEA has acknowledged from the start that there may be distortions of history (distortions from the American and other views) in the series."

In and of itself, such seeming innocence about the motives of other nations on the part of leaders of our oldest and largest education group is merely astonishing. But when combined with deep-seated mistrust and carefully-elaborated analyses of the motivations of one's own government and its elected leaders, and when that combination is enveloped in the language of international brotherhood and shared human understanding, the result is truly insidious. The inescapable result of such ratiocination is the conviction that the United States is the main obstacle to worldwide fellowship, to the permanent conversion of swords into plowshares, and to the long overdue elevation of education and other worthy social goods to the priority that they deserve. It is, in short, a recipe for despising the society whose children one is charged with teaching.

Hence the real significance of NEA endorsement of *The Unknown War* lies not in the domain of foreign policy *per se*, but rather in the insight it gives into the association's ideas about what people should learn. In that instance, television was the pedagogical medium. But the same world view often enough enters into school-curriculum and teacher-guidance materials endorsed by the NEA and by organizations that it esteems.

The association itself has published relatively little on international relations and defense policy thus far, perhaps because such subjects do not yet loom large in most elementary and secondary-school curricula, but recently it has been generous in referring teachers to "peace-resource groups."† In June 1982, for example, the NEA weekly newsletter identified thirty such, ranging from the Council for a Livable World to the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom.

Educators for Social Responsibility, one of the "peacework" organizations listed in the NEA guide, has produced a 209-page "planning and curriculum-resource guide" for "dealing with issues of nuclear war in the classroom." Some of it, in fact, has little directly to do with the classroom, instead consisting of sample letters that teachers can send to parents, school boards, and newspaper editors to invite their participation in a "day of dialogue." But much pertains directly to the content of what teachers may wish to impart to their students, the questions they might raise, and the readings they might assign. For instance, high-school teachers are encouraged to use "imaginative literature . . . to acquaint students with the dangers we face in our nuclear world, and the opportunities we have to lessen them."

How, for example, might teachers employ literature to answer the question, "But who are the Soviets?" Answer: "The short story, 'The Fate of Man,' by Mikhail Sholokov, is a good choice. It is the story of a Soviet soldier in World War II; he spends time in Nazi prison camps, and returns home to find his family has been killed in a bombing attack. The World War II setting—when the U.S. and Soviet Union were allies fighting a common enemy—may help your students bypass cold-war distortion to reach an understanding of the Soviets as people." Any teacher uncertain how to obtain this work is referred to Imported Publications, Inc. in Chicago, or Progress Publishers in Moscow. Perhaps it goes without saying that there is no parallel reference to the works of Solzhenitsyn.

A still more creative suggestion is offered in the section explaining how "Inflammatory Words Can Teach You to Hate." There, teachers and students are encouraged to consult the memoirs of Lt. William Calley to gain a better understanding of how his simplistic grasp of the inflammatory word "Communism" led to his actions at Mylai. "In all my years in the army," the Calley excerpts explain,

* See Joshua Rubenstein, "World War II—Soviet Style," COMMENTARY, May 1979.

† Such materials are under active development, however. A new curriculum on nuclear weapons and conflict resolution, prepared jointly by the NEA and the Union of Concerned Scientists, was field-tested in 37 states during the autumn of 1982 and is expected to be published by mid-1983.

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"I was never taught the Communists were human beings. We weren't in Mylai to kill human beings. We were there to kill ideology carried by—I don't know—pawns, blobs, pieces of flesh. I was there to destroy Communism. We never conceived of old people, men, women, children, babies."

And that is just about all that the entire curriculum-resource guide has to say to teachers and students on the subject of Communism or, for that matter, on American involvement in Vietnam.

Additional teacher guidance on foreign-policy curriculum issues, textbooks, and supplementary readings is provided by the ever-helpful Council on Interracial Books for Children which has devoted several of its recent bulletins to salient international issues.* One such volume was given over to a report on the "literacy crusade in Nicaragua." Another, devoted to Central America as a whole, examined 71 books (texts, encyclopedias, etc.) to determine their suitability for U.S. classrooms. The level of analysis, and the values coloring it, are adequately revealed in this brief excerpt:

> Several texts attribute complex events—including revolution—in Central America simply to the proximity of Communism in Cuba. Instead of explaining how internal events in each nation might cause dissatisfaction or revolt, readers are left with the idea that : (1) Cuba is bad because it is Communist; (2) Central American revolutions might be bad because they include ideologies similar to Cuba's; (3) therefore, the U.S. should not support these revolutions. . . .

But the showpiece of the Council's recent contributions to our understanding of world affairs is a new *Bulletin* devoted to "Militarism and Education" (subtitled "Racism, Sexism, and Militarism: The Links"). This has some (unintentionally) amusing articles, such as a brief sidebar on "militarism and handicapism," both of which turn out to be "elitist, hierarchical ideologies which value strength over human qualities and deny the equal worth of nations and individuals." But there is little to smile at in the article entitled "But What about the Russians?" by Irving Lerner, which purports to answer seven of "the questions most frequently raised about the arms race." Two brief examples will suffice:

> *Q.* But aren't we risking our way of life if we allow the Russians to get ahead?
>
> *A.* The $1 trillion defense budget that President Reagan seeks for the next four years will do more to undermine our democratic values and standard of living than anything the Russians can do. . . .
>
> *Q.* But how can we trust the Russians? How can we be sure they won't cheat?
>
> *A.* We can trust them as much as they can trust us. . . .

The Council on Interracial Books for Children, it seems fair to say, does not suffer from an inordinate fear of Communism or an overweening passion for democracy. Neither do many of the other organizations now preparing and distributing curriculum materials to the nation's teachers and students on issues of foreign policy in general and nuclear war in particular. A number of these are recommended by the NEA to its members. Most teachers feel a keen sense of obligation to do right by their students in explaining this and the other great issues facing the nation and the world. The teacher's instinct is to be accurate, informed, fair, and constructive, which is what practically every parent would want his child's teacher to be. How often, after all, does that child preface his comments on pressing issues of the day and of the ages with the phrase, "My teacher says . . ." It stands to reason that many conscientious teachers will seek curricular information and pedagogical direction from their local, state, and national organizations, and will carry that guidance into their classrooms, where it will be imparted to their youthful charges.

WHAT guidance, finally, does the National Education Association provide? How does it suggest that the moral authority and intellectual power of the teacher should be deployed? President Willard McGuire addressed the United Nations Special Session on Disarmament on June 25, 1982, offering this helpful advice to mankind on behalf of himself, the NEA, and the World Confederation of Organizations of the Teaching Profession:

> Our students must be taught to love, not hate. To respect others different from themselves, not condemn them for being different. And, the most difficult thing of all, we must teach our students that positions their governments take are not necessarily the right positions. And that they, like their teachers, have not only a right but an obligation to protest when their government's action, as in the case of the proliferation of nuclear weapons, threaten our very existence.

No doubt McGuire was well-received in Turtle Bay. For what he was there proposing, and what his colleagues have for the past decade been promoting in word and deed, is something that most UN member nations already take for granted but that the democratic societies that are heir to the educational traditions of Western civilization have tended to resist. Namely, the use of the classroom to pursue the agendas of the policy arena, the cession of the teacher's moral authority to the advancement of particular causes, the displacement of liberal learning and cognitive growth by lessons in

* As noted above, the CIBC is not an NEA affiliate and not all of its publications bear explicit NEA endorsement. However, the two organizations frequently collaborate; the NEA uncritically refers teachers to CIBC for "bias-free children's books and learning materials"; and the special "human rights" award that the NEA conferred on the Council in 1982 would seem to suggest general approbation.

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political action, and even the corruption of childhood's simple truths and pleasures by the confusions and anxieties of the adult world.

Totalitarian regimes have long recognized the teacher's power to mold ideas, influence behavior, and shape belief. That is why their schools are integral parts of the governmental-control apparatus. Radical movements, too, have come to appreciate the potency of the classroom in forming the ideology and attitudes of children, families, and communities. Hence the leader of any nation, party, or movement that wishes the United States no good would instantly see McGuire's plea to the United Nations, though cast in the language of a higher morality that transcends politics, as the very essence of politics as practiced in most of the world, thus particularly insidious when reflected back into our own schools. For it has been one of the abiding strengths of American education and of the society that nurtured it that we have not politicized the classroom, or turned teachers into propagandists, or willfully instructed our children through curricula that seek to indoctrinate. Politicization and indoctrination are, of course, what the NEA charges the "radical Right" with seeking to infuse into the nation's educational system, and this concern is legitimate. But it is not clear that an educational system organized around the views of the NEA would be any less politicized, or its curriculum any less doctrinaire, though the doctrines would surely differ.

Nor is it clear that such a system would itself retain popular respect and electoral approval. The long-term strength of public education in a democracy depends on its success in imparting skills, knowledge, and fundamental values to children without intruding politics into the schoolhouse. The parent whose child learns to read, write, and reason for himself, to weigh evidence and evaluate ideas, to respect the central tenets of a free society and to honor the terms that make him a member of it, is a parent who is apt to respect the teacher, esteem the school, and willingly pay taxes for the educational system. The parent whose child is taught that he has an obligation to protest—or, for that matter, to support—particular policies and practices that the teacher, or the teacher's national union, happens to dispute, is a parent whose lasting faith in public education dare not be taken for granted.

Over time, the signals that the national teachers' unions send into the educational system itself will have a more profound effect on the nature of American society than their decisions about which candidates to endorse and finance at election time. The implicit politics of the organization, transmitted into the classroom, the curriculum, the teachers' colleges and journals, the lessons that are taught, the homework that is assigned, the books that are read, the values that are inculcated, and the ways in which teachers represent themselves in the world of ideas and to their counterparts in other lands, will count for more than the organization's explicit political activities in the governmental domain. Moreover, the implicit politics are less visible, harder for others to appraise, more difficult either to reinforce or to combat, and far more apt to intimidate the average citizen through the aura of superior knowledge, expertise, and moral authority associated with the teacher's role in society.

In the case of the National Education Association, implicit and explicit politics seem to have converged around a single set of ideas and values. On the whole, these are now the doctrines of the Left. This is not true of the American Federation of Teachers, which is apt to end up supporting most of the same candidates on election day, but which infuses a quite different set of moral, cultural, and political values into the educational system itself, and into the society whose children it teaches. Indeed, the AFT's value structure seems to have emerged remarkably strong and resilient from a period in which so many of our major social and cultural institutions—and the elected officials who respond to them—have allowed their own to soften and bend. This discrepancy between its inward and outward politics may eventually produce symptoms of organizational schizophrenia in the AFT, but that is less worrisome than the singlemindedness of the NEA. It would, of course, be well if the AFT could bring itself to support more candidates who share its faith in freedom and its pride in liberal democracy. As for the NEA, however, unless the new executive director finds a more reliable compass with which to steer its course away from the ideological shores to which it is drifting, perhaps the most that can be hoped is that both the teachers who belong to it and the candidates who accept its support will take their own navigational bearings from other sources.

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Brother Camus

H. J. Kaplan

Mea culpa. In my morning mail I find a magazine with yet one more review of a book that I predicted was born to blush unseen, Patrick McCarthy's *Camus.** This one is by Alfred Kazin, no less. So there seems to be something of a Camus revival after all. The editors of COMMENTARY had suggested that I pronounce a few heartfelt words, they were aware that I had known Camus and shared his turf, so to speak, in Algiers and Paris during and after World War II. Actually, our acquaintance was slight. In his famous battle with Sartre, Merleau-Ponty, Beauvoir & Co., I was on his side and said so, but it was they who had been my friends. There was something off-putting about Camus, he always had his dukes up, as someone said. He had fathers, brothers, lovers, but very few friends. Anyway, I demurred at first on the grounds that it was all covered with cobwebs and no one would care. Aside from a handful of archeo-Tolstoyans, neo-Gandhians, and hapless college students, who reads Camus nowadays?

This was like standing in a gale and wetting one's finger to see if there's any wind. McCarthy's book had already appeared in London, and some of the resultant dithyrambs are proudly reproduced (together with a handsome photograph of Albert Camus by Cartier-Bresson) on the Random House jacket. Thus I learned that the prestigious Professor Stanley Hoffmann of Harvard, in a review published in England, had admired "McCarthy's mix of sympathy and critical distance," and judged his book to be "a balanced and probing examination of Camus's life and works"; and that the *Guardian* reviewer thought "McCarthy's special achievement [was] to have found the persuasive way back to Camus's writings from his charismatic career. . . . He gives us the myth and the writer as superstar, but also an array of sharp critical tools with which to keep that myth under review." Here I confess to some bemusement with "myth" and "critical tools," but more to my purpose at the moment is another quotation from the book jacket, a grand and sweeping one from Conor Cruise O'Brien (who committed a *Camus* of his own about twelve years ago) to the effect that McCarthy's book is "the best comprehensive study of Camus in English—and probably in any language," and that "if it is translated into French [it] might prove to be the turning of the tide of fashion."

This struck me as improbable: McCarthy in French, and commanding the tide. But why not, after all? Foreign historians and film-makers have played a conspicuous part in the reexamination of the French war record that has been going on so intensely since Marcel Ophuls's *The Sorrow and the Pity* was banned (as offensive to the national sensibility) from French television. Michael Marrus and Robert Paxton on Vichy, David Pryce-Jones on the Occupation, Herbert Lottman on the Left Bank†—these people have badly shredded the legends and pieties of the Resistance; and since this, precisely, was the period from which Camus emerged as Voice and Conscience of the new France, it would be interesting to know more about what he was actually doing at the time. Unfortunately, McCarthy tells us little. Even Herbert Lottman (*Albert Camus*, 1979), our richest source of fact about Camus, is relatively terse on the Occupation period. But this, in any event, is not the sort of revisionism that O'Brien had in mind. He is suggesting that if France could only see Camus with the help of Patrick McCarthy, then the fallen hero might return to public favor.

Stranger things have happened. For all I know some ingenious linguist may at this very moment be bent to his task, laboring to translate this muscular prose, non sequiturs and all, into a language whose genius, the French grammarians keep telling us, is clarity. A dubious proposition, perhaps, that famous *clarté française*, now that we are struggling with Roland Barthes and Jacques Lacan, but to put McCarthy into *any* other language it would be helpful for a translator to know why he has written

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* Random House, 359 pp., $17.95.

† *Vichy France and the Jews*, by Michael R. Marrus and Robert O. Paxton (Basic Books); *Paris in the Third Reich*, by David Pryce-Jones (Holt, Rinehart & Winston); *The Left Bank*, by Herbert R. Lottman (Houghton Mifflin). To these should be added, from inside the German establishment, the memoirs of Gerhard Heller, chief of the literature section of the Nazi propaganda ministry in Paris. These have recently been published in German; Heller figures prominently as well in the Pryce-Jones and Lottman volumes.

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this book and what he is trying to say. I submit, *pace* O'Brien, that this would be no easy task.

The story McCarthy tells of Camus's life is a foreshortening of what we already have in Lottman; the abbreviation leads to troublesome gaps and leaps, but the general outlines are clear; and anyway we would be suspicious of a biographer who found nothing to mystify him—and us—in the life of a man like Camus. It is when McCarthy summarizes Camus's thought, or offers his own, that the trouble begins. Not because he challenges or alters the conventional view of Camus as a religious temperament lost in a godless world, a moral absolutist and a leftist disaffected with the Left, but because this view remains curiously unrelated to Camus's "existence," to use the period word; because he gives the shortest possible shrift to Camus's ideas (not merely as they were entertained but as they were lived, which is what matters for the literary artist) and lacks all "feel" for the role they played in shaping the work he left us.

The analysis of *The Rebel*, for example, is mind-boggling in its simplism. It reads like the marginal comments of not one but a whole committee of professors on an exceptionally incompetent term paper. The comments may be pertinent or not, but they are invariably peremptory, almost stenographic, in form; and McCarthy hardly bothers to tie them together. So we learn that Camus, having set out "to show how Western culture since the French Revolution inspires men to murder," worked hard and read widely but finally failed because "the gaps in his reading are apparent and the reading itself blurs his intuitive understanding." We are never told what McCarthy means by Camus's intuitive understanding, or how it was blurred; or how Camus arrived at his pessimistic conclusions—not about Western culture in general but rather about its nihilistic and "rebellious" tendencies. "André Breton quarrelled with his interpretation of Lautréamont, Sartre told him he knew nothing about Hegel, and even friends disputed what he said about Bakunin." So the disaster is irremediable. McCarthy explains it with one of his characteristically rapid formulations: "Much of Camus's art is caught up with concision and the lamentations of *L'Homme révolté* [*The Rebel*] do not suit him." "Caught up" here seems to mean "requires" or "dependent on." In other words, Camus should write short, not long.

McCarthy himself is so fond of writing short that he often escapes us. In his concluding chapter, for example, he tells us that Camus believed that "heroic declarations were not enough because man is fundamentally evil or empty." And what had taught him this profound truth? "The age of Dachau." For this all those people had to die? The passage is so typical that it deserves to be quoted at greater length: "[The] pseudo-heroic rhetoric *[of terrorists who do nothing but gossip about their* ever so sensitive souls] plagues Camus's plays and spoils whole chapters of *La Peste* [*The Plague*]. Yet the age of Dachau also taught him that heroic declarations were not enough because man is fundamentally evil or empty." But whence that "because"? If man were *not* fundamentally evil or empty, would heroic declarations have been enough? For what? And did Camus really hold those views about man's nature? Or did he come to feel, as in *La Peste*, precisely, that evil and emptiness were a function of man's situation since he had lost his faith in God, and that they could be alleviated, at least, by moral action? These points may be arguable, but *my* point is that McCarthy never argues. He fires away. "Although Camus wrote a great deal," he tells us in his introduction, "only a small part remains alive. He was a bad philosopher and has little to tell us about politics. His plays are wooden even if his novels are superb." Well, the French word for superb is *superbe*, the translator should have no trouble with that, even if McCarthy's "even if" hangs a sort of question mark around it; and even if he never once in the course of this book gives us the impression that he is moved by these novels, or tries to tell us why they deserve to be called superb.

So I had some problems making sense of McCarthy and I think the French would, too. But the key issue for a publisher would be whether there is a chance of "turning the tide," as O'Brien put it. At the moment, from this distance, the prospects look poor. Gallimard has enshrined Camus in a *Pleiade* edition, the ultimate in decent burials, and these books are bought, I am told, at a moderate pace, despite their considerable cost. The plays are rarely if ever performed. But statistics prove nothing, one way or the other. The obvious fact is that neither Camus nor his intellectual adversaries of the 40's and 50's are what the French call *actuels*. Wages, prices, and trade balances are *actuels*, and so is structuralism, language, and psychoanalysis. The terrain has shifted, the jargon and the rules of engagement have changed, the intelligentsia have been largely if not definitively freed from the postwar nightmares, including the totalitarian temptation, at least in its Communist form; so that it is not merely McCarthy who would need to be translated but Camus himself. This can happen, of course; it is probably bound to happen; but not as an effect of O'Brien's tide of fashion. Camus now belongs to History and Literature. It remains to be seen on what terms.

Meanwhile, McCarthy's *Camus* has been widely if not uncritically greeted in this country. Aside from the learned journals and Sunday book sections, we've had a solid and intelligent essay by Frederick Brown in the *New York Review of Books* (November 18, 1982), a brilliant analysis by Norman Podhoretz in the *New Criterion* (November 1982) of Camus's work and the political issues underlying both the work and the reactions of critics like O'Brien and McCarthy—a shrewd and penetrating reading that sheds light and gives pleasure—and the aforementioned Kazin in the *New Republic* (November 29, 1982), "tender[ly]

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remember[ing] Camus for his opposition to capital punishment, for his opposition to every form of totalitarianism and every pretense behind it," and commending McCarthy for "bringing out the bare, hard facts of Camus's life and the many reasons . . . why, in his struggles with fashionable literary opinion, Camus increasingly felt himself to be a failure." And V.S. Pritchett, briefly, in the *New Yorker*. *E tutti quanti*. There will be others, but these are the big guns, blazing away from different angles.

So Patrick McCarthy's *Camus*—the work of a professor at Haverford College, Pennsylvania, according to the book jacket—is no mere academic exercise. It has become an event. "Are we in for a Camus revival?" asks Podhoretz. "Indications are that we may be." I can only bow my head.

THE fact remains that reading about Camus is one thing and reading (or performing) his work is another. The revival that Podhoretz is talking about may very well begin with critics and historians and a renewal of interest in a writer's life and times; but then a broader public must become involved, as happened in the case of Kipling, for example, a few years ago. Failing that, the fire goes out. For the moment we do seem to have a renewed interest (in this country, at least) in Camus's itinerary, but not really in his work. There is no consensus, as we shall see, on what deserves to survive; and Camus's biographers have given us a man, a Modern Instance—one that stirs us rather more, as we come to know him, than anything Camus wrote.

To be sure, McCarthy himself makes no such distinction: "The revival of interest *in his work*" (my emphasis), he tells us in the concluding paragraphs of his book, "has come in the late 70's. . . . When the [French] Communists and Socialists split in September 1977, Jean Daniel, who had hardly spoken to Camus in the years before his death, began mentioning him in the *Nouvel Observateur*. Camus's rejection of left-wing utopias suddenly seemed fruitful; his suspicion of the Communists was more correct than many had thought." Does this mean that McCarthy has changed his own mind about flunking Camus out in philosophy and politics? Not really. He goes on to suggest that Camus's new admirers are merely using him for their own purposes (as if posterity ever did anything else), and he particularly deplores the fact that they are "employing *L'Homme révolté* [*The Rebel*] which still seems his worst book."

For Norman Podhoretz, be it said in passing, *The Rebel* is the best, not the worst, of Camus—and he gives us some solid and persuasive reasons for his opinion, which McCarthy never does. In fact, says Podhoretz, "the Camus who should be revived is the one to whom justice is finally being done in France . . . not the travesty urged upon us first by O'Brien and now by McCarthy in the name of art but in the actual service of their anti-anti-Communist passions." This would be a consummation devoutly to be wished—if justice were indeed being done to Camus in France.

I cannot see that it is. For one thing, the passions that Podhoretz is talking about, whether anti, or anti-anti, or even anti-anti-anti, do not seem to me to be raging on the banks of the Seine. Communism (that is, the ideology of Lenin and Stalin and their epigones) has long ceased to be an intellectual problem in France, as opposed to a practical political one. The Communist party itself, after the events of May '68, the general adoption of the term *goulag* to designate the Soviet political system, and finally the defection of just about everyone who knows how to read and write, seems to have given up on the intellectuals as a bad job. For another, although Paris is still filled with contemporaries of Camus like Daniel, or former youth who remember reading and being troubled by *The Rebel* back in the 50's, when non-Communism was barely tolerated among the intellectuals and anti-Communism taboo, the focus and even the language of the political debate seem (ungratefully) to have left Camus behind.

It is not just the old story of having been right too soon, or for the wrong reasons, although I do believe there is something in that. The trouble, rather, is that Camus worried apocalyptically about the End of History and the Master-Slave Dialectic and the Legitimacy of Terror. He was haunted by Shestov, Dostoevsky, Nietzsche. He wrote *The Rebel*, perforce, without first taking the precaution of assimilating Lévi-Strauss, Barthes, Althusser, Foucault, and Lacan. Nor, perforce, has he anything to say about what Raymond Aron derisively calls archeo-socialism, the ideology of M. Mitterrand & Co. All this makes Camus rather remote from Paris at the moment; and, as the French say, the absent are always wrong.

Even in his lifetime, after the Nobel Prize in 1957, there was a notable decline of interest in Camus's work, although *The Fall* (published in early 1956) had sold very well. According to the schedule he had inscribed in his notebooks, he had now completed the preliminary business of putting his ideas in order, and his real work could begin. Only, it couldn't. The war in Algeria weighed heavily on him. He was harassed by personal problems, blocked. Ironically, when things finally began to look up and he was writing again, it was too late.

WHEN he died in an automobile crash early in 1960, in a car driven by his friend and publisher Michel Gallimard, Camus was looking forward not only to his *magnum opus* but to a new home in the south of France and to a whole new life, a program that would at last redeem him and free him from . . . what? I believe (not only on the basis of *The Fall* but from what he was saying to his friends and in his notebooks at the time) that it was from a deep sense of fraud. The word—for a less upright character—would seem excessive; not for Camus. It was not a fraud that he had deliberately perpetrated but one for which he

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felt responsible, especially since it had brought him fame and fortune. Call it a misunderstanding, after the title of his play (which Stuart Gilbert translated as *Cross Purpose*): mistaken identity, aggravated by a peculiar out-of-jointness and sense of doom; it had nagged at him even as he basked in his glory as the exemplar and spokesman of France's postwar renascence, as a hero of the Resistance and editor of *Combat*; even as his plays were being produced by the likes of Marcel Herrand and Jean-Louis Barrault, not to speak of his mistress, Maria Casarès; his novel (*The Plague*) breaking all sales records; his essays (*The Myth of Sisyphus* and *The Rebel*) figuring at the center of the controversies roiling the atmosphere of a Paris that had once again, and in part thanks to him, become the literary-intellectual capital of the world; and finally there was the bolt from Stockholm, the Nobel Prize, which struck him as carrying the joke a bit too far.

As always, he pulled himself together. He went to Stockholm and made a fine speech. But he kept protesting, mostly *sotto voce*, that a mistake had been made, it was all premature, his real work had not really begun. And why not Malraux? Camus felt that he had not so much chosen all those roles; he had been cast in them and played them as well as he could: now Byron, now Nietzsche, now the young Gandhi; in Algiers he had even had some success as a professional on the stage; but his big role, the one that counted most, was precisely the one he had not mastered. And this, surely, was the major reason for the profound depression that settled over him during the last years of his life.

McCarthy, who takes so dim a view of Camus as a thinker, does not hesitate to refer to the "greatness" of the novels—but, once again, ours not to know the reason why. "They are exceptional, if bleak, insights into the modern condition," he tells us; and their characters are "depicted with irony, ambiguity, and understatement." That seems to satisfy McCarthy, as motivation for his judgment of the novels, for he does not deign to give us more —unless it be his brief discussion of the narrative techniques of *The Plague*, which are alleged to constitute an innovation. Because Camus did not believe in God, he invented the non-omniscient narrator. *Q.E.D.* Anyway, McCarthy's case is stated, if not made. But Camus himself, alas, knew better. He knew that as a literary artist he had accomplished little or nothing of enduring value, whatever the critics and the sales figures said. Not yet.

Camus grew up, it should be remembered, in a grimly professional tradition; his elders were monsters of productivity like Gide, Proust, Martin du Gard, Montherlant, Bernanos, Romains, Giraudoux, and too many others to mention. In the background were Balzac and Zola and Papa Hugo. Even a maniacal watchmaker like Flaubert ended up with a sizable *oeuvre*. But as a writer of fiction, Camus had not only produced very little; he had not yet found a distinctive voice. Each of his novels seemed to represent a new departure in style and tone, so that his problem (like that of any young novelist) still lay ahead: to settle down, find his voice and form, and tell his story. But circumstances had always intervened, illness, poverty, the war, politics, journalism, so that in 1954, when he wrote a preface for a volume of early pieces republished (in 1958) to capitalize on his fame, he wistfully confessed that he was still looking forward to "the day when a balance will be established between what I am and what I say." A curious passage, this, and very moving. It is quite free of the posturing and drama of *The Fall*, the novella in which (a year or so later) Camus indulges himself in a sort of Dostoevskyan self-abasement, but it is deeply revealing. "On that day," he continues, "and I scarcely dare write these words, I will be able at last to build the work I have dreamed of."

CAMUS's new life was to begin with an autobiographical novel which he called *Le Premier Homme* (*The First Man*). This would take him back to his Algerian origins and give him that longed-for chance to explain himself and his people to the metropolitan French who, having at last retreated from Indochina and relinquished control of Morocco and Tunisia, were beginning to think the unthinkable about Algeria. Was not the French presence there also doomed?

We now know, of course, that it was. But this was far from clear in the 50's. What made Algeria different was that it had been, since 1830, a land of French settlement. The *pieds noirs*, as the settlers were called, were deeply rooted and a million strong. Only a very small number of them were *colons*, or landed proprietors, on the "colonialist" model propagated by the Left. By Camus's time, most of the Europeans in Algeria were urban and many—including Camus's family—were very poor. Nor were they all of metropolitan French origin; at least as many had come from Spain, Corsica, Malta, and Italy. If one adds the Jews (who were given easy access to French citizenship by the Crémieux Decree, late in the 19th century), it becomes obvious that the non-Muslim population of Algeria rather resembled the American melting pot. Although doomed (by a lower birthrate) to remain a minority, it was a people, a *folk*, with its dialects, traditions, and values, almost as difficult for the mainland French to understand as the Arabs.

Presumably, *Le Premier Homme* would have been bathed in that Mediterranean sunlight that Camus celebrates in his early lyrical essays, the sights, sounds, and smells of *Noces* and *Eté* to which he returns so nostalgically even in his philosophical work; and in that peculiar moral atmosphere, sensuous, silent, a little humiliated by the intensities of desire and pleasure, that Camus called *pudeur*. But now there was a new and terrible urgency about his project; at stake as the war news worsened was something more than his own career. The *pied noir*, Camus felt, was an invisible man,

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somewhat in the meaning that Ralph Ellison gave that term. He had to be made visible if he were to survive.

McCarthy works hard and to good effect—and so does Lottman—at conveying a sense of what it was like for Camus to grow up in the Algiers of the 1920's and 1930's, between his home in proletarian Belcourt and his schooling in the middle-class *lycée* and, later, at the university. Between Brooklyn and Manhattan, so to speak—deeply attached to his people and above all to his mother, but propelled by his brilliance and by the excellent French public-school system to leave his origins behind; so that it should not surprise us that Norman Podhoretz, the author of *Making It* and *Breaking Ranks*, shows an instinctive grasp for the tensions that racked Camus during his celebrated polemic with Sartre and the *Temps modernes* group, when he was torn between his natural feelings on one hand and the dogmas of the intellectual Left on the other.

Although the *pieds noirs* ostensibly reflected the political divisions of metropolitan France, and voted as Radicals, Socialists, Communists, Republicans, or whatnot, they inevitably gave these various tendencies what we would call a "hard-hat" orientation: conservative, national, almost tribal. The result of combining French ideas and *pied-noir* sensibility could be disconcerting and even (as in Edmond Brua's famous parodies of Corneille in the dialect of Bab-el-Oued) very funny. But this was one form of the Absurd to which Camus remained immune. Briefly a Communist in the 30's, and then (out of his deepening pacifism) a reluctant supporter of Munich, he gradually came to admit the necessity of resisting the German Occupation. But he saw little point and had no stomach for armed struggle until Leclerc's troops were approaching Paris, and when he was catapulted into his role as a Resistance hero, in circumstances almost as accidental as those that put Charlie Chaplin at the head of a workers' demonstration in *Modern Times*, he felt (as so often in his public life) that he was both the victim and the beneficiary of a misunderstanding.

This must have tried his modesty, such as it was, and his delicate sense of probity; and we know that he resented the demands that were made on his time. But his public persona was far too controlled, dignified, "Spanish," for humor. Life could and should be dealt with ironically, but it was no laughing matter. In this respect he was like André Malraux: a naturally portentous man. He could be playful and amusing with his friends, but in public his brow was always furrowed, his demeanor always grave. "After thirty one is responsible for one's face." This is a typical Camus aphorism, not necessarily original but memorable and neat. I can't remember whether he wrote it or said it or both, but it was well before thirty that he acquired his worried look.

He acquired it, one supposes, worrying about his "existential" situation, as it came to be called. Camus's name for it was the Absurd, the subject of his first important philosophical essay, *The Myth of Sisyphus*.

In one sense, Camus's preoccupation with the Absurd simply reflected the current intellectual fashion: God was dead, the universe was bereft of purpose and moral law, and man was adrift in an adventure which is bound to have an unhappy ending, as he put it. These themes were more or less assigned, so to speak, if you were a a bright student of philosophy and letters, a protégé of Jean Grenier and an avid reader of *La Nouvelle Revue Française*. In another sense, however, they spoke very personally to Camus, as we shall see, first because of his poor health and the situation of his family; and then because as he moved out into the world, the roles of Sisyphus—the seducer, the actor, and the conqueror—suggested themselves naturally to him, as did the "happy" Sisyphus of the final line of the book. He was shaping his life as he could.

McCarthy scolds Camus for the inadequacy of *The Myth of Sisyphus* as a work of philosophy, and indeed it is not difficult to fault it on that score. But reading *Sisyphus* as if it were a formal treatise is no more rewarding than to read *The Rebel* as if it were "political science." These are literary essays in the tradition of Montaigne, Pascal, Chamfort, and—closer to Camus—of Jean Grenier and Simone Weil. They are written with an easy authority and verbal felicity, but also with passion; and they speak directly to Camus's own concerns. This is why they were so effective and had a palpable influence on their time.

The Rebel, especially, must be counted as one of the crucial events in the long, slow process of decontaminating the French intelligentsia after the war. Camus's analysis of the history and spirit of revolutionary thinking seems quirky, incomplete, and abstract today, as indeed it did to many—even in France—at the time. The disciplines of the social sciences, economics, anthropology, sociology, are foreign to Camus; nor does it occur to him to examine the psychology of his rebels and revolutionists (among whom, following the literary fashion, he gives prominent place to such sports of nature as Lautréamont and the Marquis de Sade) in anything but moral and philosophical terms. Still, within its own limitations, this book was an act of lucidity and courage. It is not clear to me that the anti-Communism of *The Rebel* is what brings McCarthy's wrath down upon it, as Podhoretz alleges, but Podhoretz is certainly right in arguing that this is the Camus who deserves to be revived.

IF ANY. The question remains. The more I remember Camus and read of him, the more avid I become for details, insights, anything that will help me retrace and understand his journey from Belcourt to Paris and Lourmarin and finally to that stretch of wet highway near Villeblevin where he died. Nothing much came of the few times we met, but I keep recalling bits and pieces of talk and the way he had of squinting to

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keep the cigarette smoke out of his eyes, a sort of tough-guy pose. Clearly, it's not the writer I've been looking for, but the man.

Brother Camus.

Not that the one excludes the other, but the fact is that we are often embarrassed or exasperated or bored by the writer, never by the man. It so happens that I've been reading myself back into that period, for reasons of my own, turning hundreds of pages in books that have been sitting untouched on my shelves for all these years. The pages flake and crumble—the French used such poor paper during and right after the war—but I am surprised and pleased at how much remains readable, even lively and exciting, today. But, alas, not much of Camus. It pains me to say this. Moreover, I find myself turning away from the philosophical essays (his best work) to his most mediocre writings, the short pieces of *L'Envers et l'Endroit*, for example, simply because the writer is more in command in the former and Brother Camus more visible in the latter.

In any event, it's hard going. The mind is always vigorous, the posture noble, the prose harmonious and lucid in the traditional French way. Plenty to admire, in short, but so little to savor! So lifeless and cold! This must be the effect of what Barthes called "zero-degree writing." You keep your eyes open as long as you can, propping your temples with your fingertips, and then reach for *The Fall* —an embarrassingly melodramatic book but filled with Camus's *person*—or you pick up a Queneau, a Ponge, a Michaud, or even (my secret life!) a Marcel Aymé, to stave off sleep or despair.

The trouble is, we've been through these arguments so many times. So much of what he says seems, today, to go without saying. But let us grant that he says it with nobility and power, and at a time when it clearly did not go without saying. Before and after *The Rebel*, a book that Richard Wollheim in the *Cambridge Review* did not hesitate to compare to Rousseau and Hobbes, Camus took his role as a secular saint very seriously, at the risk (and finally at the cost) of isolating himself from all the ideological gangs whose aim, he said, was not to convince but to kill.

One of the stories from his childhood that stuck in his mind was about his father coming home and vomiting, after having witnessed a capital execution. In his arguments with D'Astier, Jeanson, and Sartre he insisted that his rejection of violence as a means did not lessen his commitment to justice as an end. Indeed, it was a weakness of his position that, in line with the tradition of the French Left, he conceded that the revolutionaries did in fact have justice on their side, regardless of the means they used. But the core of his position, the *leitmotif* of his political attitude from beginning to end, was an integral pacifism, from which he departed only once or twice—in great anguish—but never for long

His biographers, McCarthy especially, seem to feel that in his battle with the *Temps modernes* crowd Camus got much the worst of it, and that this was a major cause of the depression that so darkened those years. But how does one tot up the score? At the time of the break over *The Rebel*, Sartre and his gang were veering sharply toward Stalinism, precisely when the moribund old monster was hanging the Rajks, Slanskys, and Petkovs of the Popular Democracies, so-called, inventing the fantastic "doctors' plot" and unleashing a policy of open anti-Semitism in the socialist Fatherland itself. Solzhenitsyn and the "dissidents" were still frozen and voiceless, as far as the West was concerned, but the 50's were the period of the first worker revolts in the East: Berlin, Poznan, Budapest. Yet issue after issue of *Les Temps modernes* appeared with an interminable essay by Merleau-Ponty or Sartre or one of their acolytes chopping logic to prove that the Communists were all the more necessarily right because they were so obviously wrong. If this be victory, it was a pyrrhic one; and as the internal and external menace receded and the European recovery took shape, the sophistication and natural skepticism of the intellectuals reasserted themselves. It took time. Debates of this kind are never entirely resolved. But who can deny that it is Camus's position, on the whole, that now prevails?

Unfortunately, France was beginning to "decolonize," and what we now call the North-South issue was waiting in the wings to offer Camus's *homme révolté* another incarnation, for a time at least. All these political preoccupations, together with his personal problems and who knows what secret suspicion that it was too late, that the die was cast, kept him from settling down to what he stubbornly insisted was his true vocation. If Camus *felt* defeated, and we know from his notebooks and correspondence that he often did, it was not because Sartre had questioned his competence as a philosopher, or because he had failed to turn the Parisian intellectuals around with a single book. It was because he sat on innumerable committees, held down a job and an office at the *Nouvelle Revue Française*, wrote editorials for *Combat* and *L'Express*—not to speak of his incessant involvement in the theater, his need for sociability and erotic adventure and, increasingly, his intervention on behalf of the victims of the Algerian war. He was a prime example of what his friend, Bloch-Michel, called *la civilisation de l'agenda*; and it is a wonder under the circumstances that he managed to write any fiction at all.

WHAT he did write is troubled and oddly obscure. Here and there the lucidity and easy authority of the essayist reappear, in a reflection by Dr. Rieux (*The Plague*) or in one of Jean-Baptiste Clamence's tirades (*The Fall*); but on the whole the novels take us into a world where Camus is still feeling his way, as it were, and where his intentions have given rise to endless interpretation. But this is not merely to say that like any novelist, Camus created characters who are

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mysterious and problematical, as was the case with Meursault, the hero of *The Stranger*, the book that not only brought Camus to the attention of the French public but remains his most convincing performance as a literary artist. However we interpret the behavior of Meursault, we see him as a meaningful instance; he is part of a privatized, affectless, and disquieting world that we recognize as real. Nothing of the sort happens, however, in the two novels that Camus managed to finish in the 50's. In *The Stranger*, it was the fictional hero and not the author who was tragically unable to make himself understood. In *The Plague* and *The Fall*, it is the other way around. The characters explain themselves interminably, but what the author is trying to tell us remains unclear.

Of the two, *The Fall* is the more engaging book, a dramatic monologue by a lawyer who has made a career out of defending the weak and the poor, and who now proclaims his vaunted virtue to have been hypocritical and false, although the true cause of his guilt and the sincerity of his repentance remain so well hidden in the convolutions of his confession that Camus's critics (most of whom agree that the lawyer, Clamence, represents Camus himself) have never ceased to propose new and different *explications de texte*. The latest of these, by Norman Podhoretz, suggests that Camus felt guilty about failing to oppose Sartre's pro-Soviet position with a forthright pro-American one, for fear of breaking ranks with the Left and sacrificing his reputation as a secular saint.

Podhoretz's reading of Camus's novels is so incisive and brilliant that his idea about *The Fall* almost sweeps one away, until one remembers that Camus's deepest and most consistent political instinct was to reject the dichotomy that seems—more than a quarter of a century later—so logical and inescapable to Norman Podhoretz. He did not believe that an anti-Soviet position necessarily implied a pro-American one, as his adversaries kept insisting. His whole point, in fact, after Korea, Berlin, and the onset of German rearmament, was precisely the opposite: that it was urgent to oppose the polarization of East and West—and if this was utopian it is not to be confused with the sort of utopia that Camus denounced (as leading inevitably to totalitarianism) in *The Rebel*.

Still, there is a sense in which I believe Podhoretz is right, and indeed that he is "on" to something very deeply buried in Camus's feelings. "What I am suggesting," he says, "is that Camus believed *in his heart* [my emphasis] . . . that the cowardice and hypocrisy of which he accuses himself in *The Fall* are the cowardice and hypocrisy involved in his failure to side as clearly with the democracies as Sartre was siding with the Communists." But to be pro-American meant a good deal more, at the time, than being on the side of the democracies, which Camus certainly was. It meant accepting a policy, a "NATO" outlook, the world according to John Foster Dulles: an entirely different matter, and quite foreign to Camus's way of thinking about politics. Besides, if we are reduced to surmising what is in Camus's heart, why limit ourselves to the East-West option? Why dismiss so easily the notion that he was satisfied and at peace with himself on the issue of Algeria? He had had the courage—if it required any—to withhold support from the FLN. But few French intellectuals, even among those who declared themselves for Algerian independence, were enthusiastic about the FLN. He had denounced FLN terrorism which struck down innocent civilians and might, he said, bring harm to his mother. "I believe in justice but I will defend my mother against justice." Such a statement managed to shock everyone at once. It made the usual ritualistic bow to insurgency. But who is to say, with the war becoming increasingly tribal, that he really believed that justice was entirely on the FLN side?

Whatever he believed, he found it impossible to do or say anything to help his people. It was a hard thing to be Albert Camus in the 1950's. If he had any talent or predisposition to guilt—and who hasn't?—there was no lack of reasons. "One is always a bit at fault," as Meursault had said, in *The Stranger*.

ALL his life Camus was haunted by the idea that he was the victim of some sort of mistake, a fatal misunderstanding. In *Sisyphus* he extends this idea to humanity as a whole, but it was a very personal thing with Camus, as if the universe—even as it delighted him with the beauty of the little Algerian fishing village of Tipasa, then awarded him the Nobel Prize and made him rich—had it in for him. Precisely when and how this notion took possession of him we do not know, but his childhood and youth are so filled with intimations of it that only the most obvious need to be mentioned here.

Item. He had a sun-drenched sensual impoverished happy miserable Mediterranean childhood in the home of Grandmother Sintès in Belcourt, Algiers, an area of docks, warehouses, workshops. Camus never knew his father, who was killed early in World War I. His mother, jealously kept from all suitors by Uncle Etienne, the crippled old barrel-maker described in *The Exile and the Kingdom*, never remarried. She had to work as a servant and could not properly protect Camus and his older brother against her shrewish, slightly demented, and occasionally brutal old mother. Nor could they, of course, protect her.

Item. Camus did well in school, and the world opened up to him. One of his public-school teachers saw to it that he went on to the *lycée*. Then the excellent essayist, Jean Grenier, who happened to be in Algiers at that time, took the boy under his protection. Camus had enormous talent, appetite, charm. Everything seemed possible. But then, at the age of seventeen, he learned that he had tuberculosis and might die of it. With luck and care he might keep the disease at bay, but there was practically no prospect of a definitive cure.

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Item. In pursuing his education, Camus went to live with an uncle in town, leaving the Belcourt of his boyhood behind. The distance between him and his mother seemed to grow—far greater than the streetcar ride from town. Even as a child Camus had had difficulty communicating with his mother, who was a little deaf. But she was never far from his thoughts. Catherine Camus was a woman of Spanish origin, sweet-tempered, inarticulate, practically illiterate, but with a natural beauty and bearing that seem to have survived the laborious and rather humiliating life she had to accept, after losing her husband.

THE idea of *malentendu*, misunderstanding, first turns up in Camus's notebooks and then, in *The Stranger*, in a newspaper clipping that Meursault finds under his mattress in the prison cell where he has been waiting to be tried, ostensibly for the murder of an Arab but really (as the prosecutor develops his case) for failing to show the proper grief and piety on the occasion of the death and burial of his mother. The newspaper clipping is only briefly mentioned in *The Stranger*; it is one of those disconnected clues that one finds in Camus's fiction; but after various permutation it turns up again in his work as a play, *Le Malentendu*, the first of Camus's plays to be presented (in June 1944) to the Parisian public. It is the story of a son who, after many years abroad, returns to his native land and stays at a hotel run by his mother and sister, who make a practice of murdering their guests in order to raise enough money to escape their dreary life and go abroad. Since he chooses not to reveal his identity immediately, the son is murdered; and when they learn who their victim was, the women commit suicide.

The play was received very badly—practically hissed off the stage—despite the fact that it was produced by Marcel Herrand and starred Maria Casarès. The audience may or may not have been aware that Camus was trying to make an "existentialist" point, namely, that some sort of misunderstanding is built into the nature of things. But Jan, the hero, could easily have revealed his identity to his mother and sister; and if he failed to do so (for perfectly fatuous reasons), what had that to do with the nature of things? It was an accident, pure and simple, as far as the audience could see. In other words, the play was not only about a misunderstanding. It was one. Camus had mobilized Marcel Herrand, Maria Casarès, and the prestigious theater of Les Mathurins, and built his whole enterprise on the basis of a dramatic flaw so obvious that any third-rate critic in Paris could (and did) point it out.

Why do I make a point of all this? Not merely to establish that Camus's torment over his mother (and his motherland) ran deep, and can be related to his self-castigation in *The Fall.* He had other reasons to fuel his sense of guilt, as we have seen. But why did Camus, a highly controlled and rational writer in his essays, become so illogical, not to say incoherent, when he undertook a work of imagination?

Practically every major piece of fiction or drama that Camus wrote involves some sort of *malentendu*. *The Plague*, which is based on the bizarre idea that an epidemic can serve as an adequate allegory for a political situation like the German occupation of France, is an especially striking example. Camus labored for years on a book that simply refused to "work," for the obvious reason that political drama disappears in a situation where people are united against a natural disaster and their problems are seen as technological or administrative in their nature. And similar oddities can be pointed out in *The Fall*, in *Caligula*, and even in *The Stranger*, a carefully elaborated *apologia* by a narrator who staked his life, as it were, on the belief that in the universe of the Absurd you never explained and never complained; in short, made no *apologia*.

It would be presumptuous, no doubt, to suggest that the question I have raised can be answered simply, once and for all, but it seems to me worth noting that Camus the artist operated in a manner radically different from that of the essayist, or the man of action. As an artist, quite visibly, he became a sleepwalker. To demonstrate this in detail would require another full-length study, but for present purposes there is no need. Not only did Camus's dreams and obsessions take over in his imaginative works, but they did so with his full approval, so to speak, unhindered by concern about what Jean Grenier or Simone de Beauvoir or Jean-Paul Sartre might think, because art was by definition for Camus the domain of the instinctual, where one came home to one's deepest self.

Free at last! But coming home meant confronting his feelings for his mother and for a human community—his own—which was about to be destroyed in the name of justice. For a hero of the French Left and a secular saint it was an onerous freedom.

So he longed for it and feared it and when he finally resolved to undertake *The First Man*, the beginning of an autobiographical work that would force him to explore his origins and think things through, he did so in utter dread. Fear and Trembling! Because he knew that it would tell him and the entire world (and his mother waiting for him in Algeria) who he really was. The boy from Belcourt, Brother Camus.

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Economic Futures

Melville J. Ulmer

IN THE dawn of civilization the world was rife with men who heard voices in the air, saw faces in the skies, and knew what the future held. Today we have many, much more down to earth of course, who perceive the future in their charts, tables, and social theories. They are often, though not always, professors, and they engage in a discipline that is in one respect safe and in another risky. It is safe because, unlike business forecasters who may be concerned with next year's sales or the GNP, the contemporary prophet looks twenty years or more ahead and embraces all of society. Like many of his predecessors—say Malthus, Marx, and Schumpeter—he may not be around when the returns come in, which could be a blessing. If he does live to that day, he can hope that his prognosis will be forgotten—unless he is right, in which case he will be sure to provide reminders.

The risky part has to do with the credibility of the portraits drawn of the future. The next decade or two will be shaped by the interaction of innumerable forces, only some of which can be visible to even the keenest of present observers. Hence the gate is open, when looking far ahead, for subjective judgments which have every good chance of being faulty. Furthermore, since views of the future are almost always coupled with policy recommendations, a kind invitation is also delivered for just plain political wishful thinking. Things move faster today than they did 100 years ago. The risk is that the credibility will wear too thin to conceal the prominence of the political bias. At worst, it can happen on publication.

The three most recent specimens of the fatidic art considered here follow a general rule, to which there are occasional exceptions. The conservative Herman Kahn in *The Coming Boom** is drawn to the brighter prospects, which imply, at a minimum, little or no further temptation for collective intervention in our economic processes. The radical authors Barry Bluestone and Bennett Harrison, in *The Deindustrialization of America*,† perceive disasters present and looming unless the savage stranglehold of capitalism can be successfully broken. Amitai Etzioni, who straddles the distance between Left and Right, sees in *An Immodest Agenda*** neither clouds on the horizon nor a splendid sunrise.

Not that our choice among prophets must be arbitrary, or that views are ineluctably predestined by political genes. All of these authors buttress their arguments with interpretations of the past and the present, often statistical, and with theoretical propositions about their subsequent, probable evolution. Yet each implicitly relies on particular notions of basic principles—of freedom, justice, equality, human welfare, and democracy—and their arguments are conducted at strikingly different levels of plausibility.

On one signal observation alone, all three are in agreement. All view the Reagan administration as a watershed in history, although they clearly differ on the causes of its rise and on what we may expect to follow. That point of departure lends an immediacy to their presentations that might otherwise be lacking. Of the three, Herman Kahn's interpretation departs most firmly from the remaining two and, without following slavishly, comes close to presenting the administration's official conception of itself.

Ronald Reagan, in Kahn's estimation, has placed the emphasis in public policy exactly where it is needed. To be sure, whether tax and budgetary policies or foreign relations were managed as adroitly as possible in some instances remains debatable, but on the great issues, which Kahn stresses throughout his book, he believes Reagan has been fatefully right: *for* private enterprise and individual initiative, *against* excessive public intervention, regulation, and planning; *for* expanding the national income, *against* the "zero-sum game" of struggling for its redistribution; *for* a revitalized America capable of winning East-West peace through strength, *against* cumulative concessions, retreats, and "preemptive surrender"; *for* traditional values in personal responsibility, education, family relations, and duty, *against* the still dominant influence of "rights and privileges." "In fact," Kahn writes, "we believe that the President has

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* Simon & Schuster, 237 pp., $14.95.
† Basic Books, 323 pp., $19.95.
** McGraw-Hill, 418 pp., $26.95.

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the opportunity to forge the most important coalition in fifty years," enlisting those who take the "conservative" side in economics, foreign policy, and social issues. When he says "we," advises Kahn, he means himself and his colleagues at the Hudson Institute, a research group he directs.

THE "coming boom" envisaged in his book is much more than a mere short-term business cycle expansion. He believes that the favorable setting provided by Reaganomics in curbing inflation and spurring private enterprise will launch the United States on an era of spectacular growth and prosperity that "could extend well into the next two decades, or perhaps well beyond."

One assumption underlying Kahn's glowing vision is that the swing to conservatism evident in the 1980 election will gather force and prove to be enduring. Monetary and fiscal policies will then resist the contrived expansions and contractions of pre-Reagan economics. In time the federal budget will be balanced, at least on a cyclical basis. Excessive tax and regulatory restraints on business will ease, releasing a pent-up propensity for calculated risk-taking and innovation. Faith will grow in the ability of the capitalist system to improve the welfare of all, and so will "a constructive attitude toward life and work" among the alienated poor. Call it trickle-down, the rising tide that lifts all boats, or whatever; an expanding national income will relieve the invidious struggle for larger shares. Spawned by all this, nothing less than a technological revolution will occur, in Kahn's estimation.

The seeds of that revolution, he believes, have been implanted in cumulative scientific breakthroughs, the buds of which are already evident. Energy limitations, he predicts, will fade away as "seismic detection" uncovers new sources of oil and gas and ingenious technologies stimulate the growth of synthetics, fission, solar, windpower, and other sources. Environmental deterioration will be reversed by advanced techniques in pollution avoidance, sewage treatment, and recuperation of water resources. The nation's productivity will arch sharply upward with new developments in automation, silicon chips, computer networks, space technology, bioengineering, novel food sources for humans and animals, new fibers, foams, crystals, and other materials. High-speed trains, electric buses and cabs, and commuter aircraft will transform mass transportation. And all of this, as it materializes, will no doubt inspire a flood of capital investment and a mounting demand for human services.

Kahn thinks that by the year 2000, just seventeen years away, per-capita GNP could easily double. The chief obstacle? The "neoliberal symbolists" who oppose the private sector, support the public sector, and would substitute income redistribution for economic growth. But he is confident that even now the influence of the "neoliberals" is being overcome, despite their present dominance in the media, educational institutions, and the government bureaucracy.

All are hopes, rather than dreams, for which Kahn provides suggestive evidence and persuasive speculation. Sober thought, however, must add the qualification that he presupposes a remarkable (though not impossible) confluence of the most propitious of circumstances. Not the least of these is a swift resolution, in human attitudes and behavior, of the conflict between (in Daniel Bell's formulation) the "Protestant ethic and the psychedelic bazaar." Kahn assumes that the pendulum is swinging back from instant gratification and self-indulgence toward diligence, self-reliance, frugality, and cost-conscious rationality; he may be right. More difficult to accept uncritically is his almost cavalier dismissal of the role of government.

The insufficient cerebration Kahn allots to this subject is evidenced by an occasional embarrassing confusion, as in the observation that during the past thirty years "the role of government in the United States . . . has not increased greatly." In this, he is simply misled by a carelessly drawn graph, the work of his own draftsman. In fact expenditures at federal, state, and local government levels climbed from 24 percent of the GNP in 1950 to 36 percent in 1980; government revenues (mostly taxes) grew from 28 to 44 percent of the national income. The last measure records the enormously increased "wedge" (between the earnings of people and what they really receive) that troubles Arthur Laffer and other supply-siders—and with which the author himself, elsewhere in *The Coming Boom*, is also concerned.

At any rate, all Kahn really has to say about government is the need for cutting its excessive, often self-contradictory intrusions into private business. He is no libertarian. He acknowledges that there are positive functions government must perform for a successful foray into a prosperous future. But concerning the nature of those functions, or the coordinate challenge of instilling efficiency and coordination in the public sector, *The Coming Boom* has nothing to say at all.

This indifference leads Kahn to overlook what could be the most formidable, and yet avoidable, barrier to realization of his forecast. More administrations have been unseated in the United States and abroad by unfavorable twists in the business cycle than by any other political or economic event or issue. Even if the currently reluctant recovery catches fire and generates an upswing of unprecedented vigor, as Kahn expects, the lessons of the past must overhang as a caution. Business expansions seldom last more than three years and often peter out after one or two. Sooner or later—and possibly before the next presidential election—a visit may be expected from the next unwelcome specimen of the "recessions" or little "depressions" that have regularly blighted our economic course.

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If the trend of the past twenty years provides any clue, the next downturn in business activity will be more severe than the one that seems to be finally ending. Kahn would surely hate to see a reversion to the self-defeating pump-priming of the neo-Keynesians. Yet his own stance invites the other extreme: a vacuum of inaction. A fundamental obligation of government is prudent preparation taken well in advance to offset disaster. A failure to fulfill that obligation could convert the conservative coalition into a battered Hooverite whipping post, and leave Kahn's inspirational prognosis in tatters.

NOTHING, one supposes, would please Barry Bluestone and Bennett Harrison more. Karl Marx predicted a final "crisis of capitalism," and his stepchildren have been seeing crises in the offing ever since. Bluestone and Harrison see one coming in *The Deindustrialization of America*. A sympathizer, Robert L. Heilbroner, has spied crises on the horizon three times in the last decade alone.* Were dates supplied, as they never are, the game would be more interesting.

Bluestone and Harrison are professors at Boston College and MIT respectively, and both were leaders in the propagation of "Radical Economics" among graduate students and young professors in the late 1960's and early 70's. In this book they illustrate the classic technique of their discipline, which consists of turning upside down all the conventional guideposts of rational economic thinking. While ordinary economics holds that capital must remain sensitive to technological and price-cost opportunities everywhere, and then move alertly to allocate resources in the optimum way, Bluestone and Harrison view mobility as a disaster. While nearly all analysts, including Herman Kahn, think that "high-tech" is the industrial promise of the present and the future, Bluestone and Harrison brand it a tool for the exercise of inordinate corporate power. The rigidity of their ideological framework, or some species of otherworldly cynicism, leads them to see exactly what they want, and little else.

The picturesque thesis of this book is that as the Vietnam war groaned to a close, the great corporations of America embarked on their most ambitious plan to exploit the public. Their initial move was on the local level, with which the authors are most directly concerned. Here the corporate objective was, and is, to break labor unions and utilize "political clout to insist upon reductions in local taxation and therefore cuts in community services and the social safety net." The method is to shift operational plants abruptly from less favorable parts of the country to locations more amenable to corporate interests. In the bereft areas, jobs are lost. That is exactly what Bluestone and Harrison mean by "deindustrialization"—loss of jobs directly or indirectly resulting from plant closures.

THE opportunity of the major corporations to extend their hegemony on the national level, Bluestone and Harrison contend, came with the Republican victory of 1980. "The election of Ronald Reagan," they write,

> elevated the "civil war" to a new level. To reindustrialize America, the federal government is insisting on creating a "good business climate" in the United States through extreme cuts in corporate taxes, drastic reductions in the government's guarantee of the social safety net, and the virtual deregulation of the private sector. Washington has joined the corporate sector in declaring a class war on workers and their communities.

The net result of all this is presumed to be the economic devastation of great sections of the country coupled with massive unemployment, partly because of the "flight" of capital abroad but mostly because of its malefic peregrinations from one area of the nation to another. Using data for the years 1960 to 1976, they estimate that during the 1970's as a whole, plant closings "destroyed" 32 million jobs, a figure that they cite repeatedly and with rising intensity. They lament especially the fate of Massachusetts (where both authors reside)—a "terminal case," with fewer jobs in 1976 than it had in 1969.

What Bluestone and Harrison observe is the less important part of a greater picture which, with their monoptic vision, they assiduously overlook. While plant closings destroyed 32 million jobs according to the Bluestone-Harrison estimate, it is equally evident, according to their own data and their own simple method of extrapolation, that plant *openings created* 36 million jobs in the same period. That leaves a net *gain* of 4 million jobs provided by capital mobility. Nor is that all. In the years subsequent to 1976, their victimized Massachusetts executed a spectacular recovery, reaping some of the richest fruits of capital's propensity to travel, a phenomenon they leave unmentioned. The languishing textiles, leather, and shoe industries gave way to electronics, computers, drugs, aerospace, instrumentation, and weaponry. In just five years, from 1975 to 1980, employment in Massachusetts rose by 17 percent, well above the national average of 11 percent. Employment in the new industries rose by 40 percent.†

Such observations suggest the possibility that what is needed is not less capital mobility but more. That indeed is the opinion of most management consultants and many economists. They point to the formidable barrier represented by union contracts which provide for comprehensive pension, health-care, life-insurance, unemployment-benefit,

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* See his *Beyond Boom and Crash*, *Business Civilization in Decline*, and *An Inquiry into the Human Prospect*.

† According to a study by the Massachusetts Division of Employment Security, published in the Washington *Post*, November 30, 1982.

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and severance obligations. Companies such as Kaiser Steel, Martin Marietta, and Chicago Tribune have found that contemplated closedowns would have cost as much as $70,000 per employee. In the light of these and other obvious expenses, corporations do not shift plants capriciously, like a child with chips at a checkerboard, as Bluestone and Harrison suppose; nor—and here is the problem—do they move as often as they should when sound economic considerations would strongly recommend it.

Nor did real income stagnate in the 1970's, as these dour authors claim, even though that decade was blemished by the OPEC oil shock, an unprecedented inflation, and the worst mismanagement in Washington of the present generation. In the poorest years of that benighted decade, 1973 to 1979, and despite the capitalist marauders who, we are told, were avidly at work, disposable income per capita rose by more than 10 percent. Unemployment will no doubt rise and fall in the future as it has done in the past, but a deadly, steady "deindustrialization" leading to a Bluestone-Harrison "crisis of capitalism" in the United States is less likely than a burst of private investment leading to labor scarcities in Yugoslavia. Which brings to mind the Bluestone-Harrison solution to America's economic ills. Their recommendation is for worker ownership and management of industry along with planned production for "use" rather than profit. That was the dream Tito had.

AMITAI ETZIONI is an intellectual mediator and man of influence—a prolific writer, a White House adviser under Carter, a former sociology professor at Columbia, and currently University Professor at George Washington University. One might suppose that he would cut a swath somewhere between Kahn and Bluestone-Harrison, in the liberal tradition of sorts which he has long sustained. Instead, in *An Immodest Agenda*, he seems to rise above the issues that distinguish Left, Right, and Center and to speak more in the cadences of a philosophical sermon. His concern is with our nation's need for civility, "mutuality," rationality, sympathy, and good will.

True, Etzioni promises early on to explore "our economic, ethical, personal, and political options for the next two decades." It is a promise which, if not to be judged misleading, must be interpreted to mean the problems of "human relations," as distinct from institutions, that underlie these options. For it is difficult to discover in his work either definite support of or definite opposition to any specific policy choices that nearly all agree the future must determine. I think it is fair to observe also that in this strangely convoluted and magniloquent book, more than 400 pages long and costing just under $27, I was unable to find a single fresh idea.

Etzioni does take occasional swipes at the *bêtes noires* of traditional liberal thinking. In the very beginning he complains that the Reagan administration has borne "New Whigs" to the forefront of the national political stage, and that "the 1981 correctives suggested by the administration for our economic ills were first, second, and above all less government." He resents the callousness of these cuts to the "needs of minorities and the poor," though no supporting evidence is offered. But within a page or two Etzioni turns away from this brush with policy to confront the New Whigs, in and outside Washington, who, he says, view "individuals as the ultimate source of rights." Although he cites no one who has said this, he does display voluminous passages from the works of Milton Friedman, Robert Nozick, and Friedrich von Hayek, none of whom holds a government position. On the other hand, he leaves strictly unconfronted those more moderate conservatives or neoconservatives who also stress the need for more individual initiative and freedom in economic affairs.

It turns out that, for Etzioni, individualism is a proclivity inherited, like a diseugenic gene, from our early forefathers and is the last thing America needs. The prime requirement of our times, he writes, is for a deliberate commitment by men and women to place themselves in "the voluntary service of larger objectives." A quick explanation follows: "The commitment required is not for ego to sacrifice itself to other, or to a higher cause, but for both ego and other to attend to each other and to the shared world. I hence refer to it as 'mutuality.'"

When it comes to execution, Etzioni bogs down. Mutuality, he says, should be attained by active participation in local or regional associations as well as "political parties and political action groups," but he does not reveal what will give the movement its impulse. This book perhaps? Nor does he distinguish these proliferating associations and their causes from "interest groups," "single-issue causes," and PACs, all of which, elsewhere in *An Immodest Agenda*, he roundly condemns.

Most remarkable about the Etzioni treatment of "mutuality" is that nowhere in the 181 pages he devotes to the topic does he mention, much less discuss, the specific conditions that currently disrupt amicable community living, to wit: the scourge of violent crime which for the majority of law-abiding citizens has shut off the streets of their cities; racial tensions fired by demagogic leaders and not entirely unrelated to crime; enclaves of unassimilated, and sometimes unassimilable, immigrants in Florida, Texas, and elsewhere; regional economic rivalries including the ancient farm-city conflict; terrorism and anti-Semitic disturbances. These are difficult and depressing topics, but important precisely in the context Etzioni chooses to adopt. His only reference to Ernest van den Haag, who has written cogently on crime, is to classify him, and others, as "New Tories." Such people, he writes, believe that individuals are "born with an unsavory moral na-

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ture," and hence they would impose "authority" to keep them from "savaging each other." Whether Etzioni is opposing law enforcement at this point is not as clear as it ought to be, but if all individuals were successfully "equalized" as he elsewhere proposes, I would agree that the question would become irrelevant.

THE second half of the book begins ostentatiously with "The Seven Elements of Industrialization." These turn out to be nothing more than transportation, communication, power, innovation, legal and financial institutions, and investment, which could well vie in excitement with a listing of The Five Senses of Mankind. Closely following is a snapshot economic history of the United States, including some misleading data on poverty and the distribution of income, and finally some comments on the current economic situation and a glimpse into the future.

Toward the end of the book Etzioni sees much more merit in the Reagan administration's efforts to stimulate growth than he did at the beginning, but he remains dismayed by the administration's budgetary difficulties and even more by its "tilt toward the rich," though he offers no specific alternatives. He does propose, however, that businessmen be more "ethical" and conscious of their "social obligations," an exhortation that has been voiced repeatedly ever since Alfred Marshall's famous essay of a century ago on "business chivalry." He also recommends the use of "semi-targeted" measures to induce more rapid economic progress. By the latter he means the broad-based tax incentives and disincentives employed by every administration in the United States since FDR. Toward the close he summarizes his findings in a passage which incidentally supplies an instructive sample of his expository style:

> What it all comes down to is that reconstruction of community and a period of reindustrialization seem likely to unfold in the next years. It is much less clear whether the sharp zigzagging of the past will be overcome—whether an excessive and insensitive tilt toward high production and its corollaries will be promoted, only to be followed by a new social reaction and attempts to commit America to a radically different core project; or whether the clearly needed and probably forthcoming production tilt will be moderated this time by great social sensitivity, making for steadier, more balanced progress over the longer run. It is not that in the latter case America may not face, after a decade or so of reindustrialization, increased concern with other priorities. However, with moderation now, the swings of the pendulum might be shortened, the social and economic costs of wild swings avoided, and less disruptive shifts back and forth between societal priorities achieved.

Members of the Democratic party who have been looking, thus far in vain, for an inspiring alternative to the program of their rivals will not find it in *An Immodest Agenda*. They would be better advised to go to *The Coming Boom* and try to work out some intriguing variation of that.

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Down Memory Lane with Joe McCarthy

Nelson W. Polsby

IN OBEDIENCE to iron laws of human behavior, it is time for Americans to wax nostalgic about things that died in the 1950's. And so there has been something of a revival of interest in the execrable music and the mediocre movies of the time, as well as in the life and works of Senator Joseph McCarthy, Republican of Wisconsin, and his eponymous "ism." McCarthy's great moment on the political stage stretched from January 1950 until December 1954. The earlier date marks the first of many well-publicized episodes of recklessness and untruthfulness—his famous speech in Wheeling, West Virginia in which he claimed without a shred of evidence that there were 205 Communists in the government. At the end of 1954 he was finally censured by his colleagues in the U.S. Senate. A true phenomenon of the 1950's, he died of drink and dissipation in May 1957, forty-eight years of age. For two years in a row he was on George Gallup's annual list of "most admired men" —seventh ranked in 1953, fourth in 1954.

The period since then has not been kind to McCarthy's memory. Among the respectable folk who make the worldwide market in posthumous political reputations, McCarthyism is still an ugly word, even though McCarthy has had his share of cult followers. There is by now a sizable McCarthy literature, a little in favor of him and a lot against him, and an ever-growing body of additions to the historical record and reinterpretations of the significance of his career in American politics.

In general, the more interesting of these books and articles pay less attention to McCarthy himself than to the fuss he caused in the politics of his time. This is as it should be. Whether Joe-as-stimulus was the cynical thug Richard Rovere thought he was (*Senator Joe McCarthy*, 1973), or the addled opportunistic primitive recently brought to us in an exhaustive biography by Wisconsin historian Thomas C. Reeves,* is of little consequence. Or at any rate it is of less consequence than understanding the response to McCarthy in the political system at large. McCarthyism, not McCarthy, is what needs explaining, and what has produced the most absorbing work.

The main explanations divide into three schools of thought. There are those who believe McCarthyism was a mass phenomenon and those who think it was an elite phenomenon. Among those who think that it was an elite phenomenon, some think Democrats were primarily responsible for his prominence, and some think that Republicans were primarily responsible.

It was perhaps the fanciest explanation that surfaced first. This was McCarthyism as a mass phenomenon, the ingenious concoction of a group of brilliant social scientists clustered mostly around Columbia University: Richard Hofstadter, Daniel Bell, Seymour Martin Lipset, and a few others. Favorable resonance to McCarthy in the population at large, they said (among other things), was the product of status anxiety on the part of large groups of people. Terms like "shabby genteel," "downward mobility," and "working-class authoritarianism" were trotted out in order to get at what appeared to be the puzzling, indeed frightening, phenomenon of a sizable popular response to a proletarian, institution-wrecking, "populist" American demagogue.

Unfortunately for this cluster of explanations, there was never a whole lot of evidence that supported the notion of McCarthy as an idol of the masses. By far the best study showing that status anxiety might be playing a part in mobilizing pro-McCarthy sentiment—and the main finding could be read as equivocal on the central issue—was a Columbia doctoral dissertation (published in 1980, many years after it was written) by Martin Trow, the data for which came entirely from respondents in Bennington, Vermont.† Like many well-publicized Americans, e.g., Elvis Presley, McCarthy had his devoted followers. But decisions to publicize are elite decisions, and public figures who handle themselves badly can wear out their welcome. Reeves gives copious chapter and verse on McCarthy's bad management of his public countenance: his attempts to pick fights with the calculatedly passive Dwight Eisenhower, his slanging matches with

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* *The Life and Times of Joe McCarthy*, Stein and Day, 819 pp., $19.95.

† *Right-wing Radicalism and Political Intolerance* (Arno Press).

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numerous fellow Senators, his dabbling in smears of the Protestant clergy, and, of course, the rhubarb that finally did him in, instigated by his juvenile Iago, Roy Cohn, namely, his war with the U.S. Army.

Reeves makes a pretty good case that there was a lot of random carelessness in McCarthy's behavior as he lurched from headline to headline. With nothing much other than his own animal vitality, his heedless resilience, and his lack of inhibition propping up the accusations he was making, how come the show ran for so long?

One argument, evidently popular with some New Left revisionist historians, pins the blame on a phenomenon described as a "cold-war consensus." This presumably was a product of whoever owned and operated the cold war, and therefore leads to the door of the Truman administration. According to this theory, it was Truman-Acheson hype that euchred American public opinion into supporting aid to Greece and Turkey, the Truman Doctrine, the Marshall plan, and all manner of post-World War II unfriendly acts toward the Soviet Union. McCarthyism was the domestic price we paid for all this manipulation, the logical outcome.

As the historian Richard Freeland says:

> The emotional and political forces and the patterns of belief . . . that were to provide the essential energies of postwar anti-Communism . . . were aroused and . . . developed . . . as the result of a deliberate and highly organized effort by the Truman administration . . . to mobilize support for . . . the European Recovery Program. . . . In the absence of this cold-war consensus, it seems likely that the events that triggered McCarthyism would have been accepted with relative calm.

This contemporary view in some respects echoes an interpretation of American politics that prevailed in McCarthy's time. In the 1950's, it was an article of faith among certain right-wing thinkers that the foreign policy of the United States was the main cause of practically everything unacceptable that went on in the world. It therefore followed that a search for the causes of defeat of the Chiang Kai-shek regime on mainland China by the Communists would sooner or later focus on the U.S. State Department, and on Dean Acheson, who then directed the affairs of State from behind his famous bristling mustache. Nowadays, this particular argument is not much admired. Occupying the field are alternative interpretations based on such diverse materials as the sober reconsideration of Nationalist Chinese capabilities and second thoughts about the obsessions of the Luce magazines. Remarkably, however, the original premise, that American domestic politics causes everything, survives in a new rendition: it now seems that we were incorrect to charge the fall of China against Acheson's account, because in those years he was fomenting something much worse, namely, the domestic disease of McCarthyism itself.

This startling decantation of old vinegar into new goatskins brings to mind the sad story of the late Wolf Ladejinski, the State Department agricultural expert who in the course of his U.S.-sponsored efforts at land reform in Asia during the 1950's was charged with Communist sympathies, exonerated, and then fired for conflict of interest stemming from his private speculations in the commodities market. The story went around that if they couldn't get you for Communism, they'd get you for capitalism. It took thirty years for a similar fate to overtake Harry Truman and Dean Acheson: soft on Communism in the 1950's turns into precursor of McCarthy in the 1980's.

THE idea that McCarthyism was a creature of Democratic elite manipulation of foreign policy strains credulity. In order to take it seriously a reader must believe other, utterly implausible propositions: for example, that the Soviet Union during McCarthy's heyday was doing little or nothing on its own account to cause anxieties on the part of Americans, and that, therefore, the Truman-Acheson foreign policy operated in an existential vacuum affording the Democratic leaders a large smorgasbord of tactical options. Otherwise, why take the view that Democrats, whom McCarthy attacked and who attacked McCarthy, were the root cause of McCarthy's success? Had they refrained from scratching, so goes the argument, there would never have been an itch.

But since itches are sometimes caused by things other than the scratches of their victims, a prudent observer will look further. We know, and McCarthy's biographer Reeves helpfully documents the point, that McCarthy was regarded by leading Republicans as tactically convenient and politically profitable to the Republican party. It was Republican party managers who put McCarthy on the rubber-chicken circuit to spread his message; and Republicans who backed his demands for broadcast air time, Republicans who supported him at the grass roots both in Wisconsin and all around the country, and leading Senate Republicans who scurried around in the corridors up on Capitol Hill trying to save McCarthy's face after he had dug himself in too deep.

If we are ready to believe that neither Russians nor Republicans played an active part in shaping the political realities of the 1950's, then the theory that McCarthyism was caused by Democratic elite activity makes sense. Otherwise, not.

The first scholarly attempt to argue the case that the principal cause of McCarthyism could be located among Republican leaders was my own effort published in the leading British journal of political science.* This article did some secondary analysis of public-opinion data in an attempt to see if the mass-politics theory of the Columbia crowd could be sustained by what the surveys of the period were

* "Towards an Explanation of McCarthyism," *Political Studies*, October 1960.

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picking up. The evidence certainly did not disconfirm their notions that Catholics, Irish- and German-Americans, new-rich Texans, working-class authoritarians, the shabby genteel, and other allegedly anti-Communist and status-anxious types in the population were McCarthyites. For the most part, such allegations could not be tested. Insofar as they could be, the evidence was not negative so much as pallid and inconclusive. Far more robust was the straightforward finding that Republicans in the general poulation pretty much backed McCarthy and Democrats did not; and among McCarthy backers, Republicans greatly predominated. This had always been the case in Wisconsin, of course, where McCarthy's political career had antedated his discovery of McCarthyism. National survey figures confirmed the pattern.

On reflection, it should not have come as a surprise that in the United States, party labels would be organizing political attitudes more decisively than constructs derived from the academic study of social stratification. The Democratic and Republican parties are actual organizations that contest elections, rent billboards, and advertise on television. They have offices and you can call them on the telephone. None of these things is true of an entity known as the working class—or for that matter the executive committee of the bourgeoisie.

PERHAPS the most thoroughgoing look at the general problem of support for civil liberties in America during the 1950's was a methodologically cunning study by Samuel Stouffer. In *Communism, Conformity, and Civil Liberties,* published in 1955, Stouffer reported that he could barely find any spontaneous interest in McCarthy at all, one way or another, among the American people. If we were to believe Stouffer, it would be necessary to take less seriously the indications of McCarthy's prominence that an appearance on Gallup's annual "most admired" list implied. As a grass-roots phenomenon, McCarthy never loomed as large as he did in Washington.

So what were we to make of the considerable uproar that McCarthy caused among Washington elites? This uproar was real enough. Richard Rovere said:

> After the 1952 elections, it was believed in the Senate that McCarthy was responsible for the presence there of eight men—which meant that he was responsible for the absence of eight others.

A hard look at the surveys seemed to indicate that while McCarthy may have made his mark in Washington, his grip on the country at large had been vastly overestimated—by Washington analysts and by academic observers. This overestimation was itself an important piece of political reality, however. Although the spontaneous public response to a McCarthy might be insignificant, his attention-getting antics could be used by political leaders to mobilize and structure elite opinion. The beliefs of leaders about public attitudes could be used as a weapon in the conflicts the leaders were having over public policy. Public opinion in this sense—as a constraint on the policy options of decision-makers—could be constructed out of the raw materials of a McCarthy and his activities by Washington politicians. This was not inconsistent with some of the best general studies written during the 1950's of how public opinion worked in the political system, for example studies by Gabriel Almond and Bernard Cohen. These studies saw the general population as divided into attentive publics whose attention could be directed and their involvement enlisted by signals from political elites.

This general line of argument gave helpful hints about how McCarthy came to have the importance he gained in national politics. It was acknowledged that McCarthy was good newspaper copy—and more than that, was an uncommonly obliging source of news. He liked and cultivated Washington journalists, spent time with them, and fed them stories. A myth has grown up that McCarthy manipulated the press more or less at will, and pretty much got the publicity he wanted. This in turn was one source of the exaggerated belief in Washington of his political power at the grass roots. Edwin Bayley, a well-known political reporter who covered McCarthy for the Milwaukee *Journal* in those days, has been at considerable pains to whittle this myth down to size in his recent book, *Joe McCarthy and the Press.**

Bayley shows that many of the best American newspapers grappled with McCarthy's outrageous charges, and regularly criticized and denounced him, and that the penetration of McCarthy as a publicity item into ordinary newspapers around the country was not as deep as was commonly believed. Even so, McCarthy was a considerable success as a self-promoter. The reality of McCarthy's capacity to get favorable notice was much smaller than the myth, but larger than negligible. McCarthy's charges were almost always worthless. By that standard he should probably not have been in the newspapers at all. Insofar as news media are supposed to winnow out truth from falsehood and print the truth, virtually any space given over to McCarthy-generated news was testimony to failure in the news-delivery system. And by that unrealistically stringent standard, McCarthy did rather well.

The heart of the problem from the standpoint of journalists was their view that if an important personage said something—even something of doubtful veracity—an obligation existed to report what had been said. The importance of the source gave significance to the utterance as an authentic representation of the beliefs of a national leader. So the fact that McCarthy was important got him publicity, and the fact that he got publicity made him important. In addition to mere well-known-

* University of Wisconsin Press, 1981.

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ness, what gave McCarthy his newsworthiness was the willingness of other Washington leaders to accord him importance. It was because his peers considered him useful or dangerous that the coverage of his activities was warranted; the coverage stopped abruptly after he was censured by the Senate. Thus the news coverage was in some respects a derivative of his Washington standing—and especially derived from decisions by Republicans in the Senate to invest his charges with seriousness and to exploit them in an effort to discredit the postwar leadership of the Democratic party.

McCarthy's relations with more responsible leaders of the national Republican party have not been given the detailed attention they deserve. Successive Republican Senate leaders—Taft, Knowland, Dirksen—seem to have regarded him as an occasional instrument of partisan opposition. After the election of 1952, a landslide for Dwight Eisenhower, McCarthy's partisan usefulness diminished sharply. Inconveniently, McCarthy remained on the scene, inheriting the chairmanship of a Senate committee. This posed a great problem for the Republican President.

The efficacy of Eisenhower's "hidden-hand strategy" for dealing with McCarthy has been much debated. Eisenhower's unwillingness to denounce McCarthy, his failure to intervene directly to protect various entities in the executive branch from demoralization, his famous omission of a paragraph of praise for General Marshall, whom McCarthy had attacked, in a campaign speech, have been interpreted as excessively pusillanimous and unnecessarily encouraging to McCarthy and his allies. Latterly, this view has been challenged. Arthur Larson, Milton Eisenhower, and now, in a significant new book, Fred I. Greenstein,* have argued that what looked like weakness was in fact strength, as with great inner discipline President Eisenhower executed a policy of giving McCarthy enough rope to hang himself.

Now that Greenstein has spread the evidence of Eisenhower's distaste for McCarthy and of his behind-the-scenes plotting to thwart McCarthy generously on the record, there seems no reason to doubt what Eisenhower's intentions were—to wage a war of attrition against McCarthy at minimum cost to himself. There is room, however, to dispute Eisenhower's strategic judgment. If there is such a thing as enough rope, surely there is such a thing as too much rope. A plausible case can be made that Eisenhower's approach might have cost him too little popularity, which he had in surplus, and too high a price was paid in the State Department and in the coin of the quality of American diplomacy for many years thereafter.

Hard evidence is difficult to produce on matters like departmental morale, or administrative effectiveness, or on such matters as the number of gifted people who decided against pursuing careers in the foreign service during and after the 1950's. There seems to be a general consensus that in these respects the State Department, the Voice of America, and the United States Information Agency suffered greatly during the two years Eisenhower was feeding McCarthy enough rope. And Eisenhower, it could be argued, left office a more popular President than was altogether necessary for the good of the country.

In the Senate, exactly half the sitting Republicans ultimately voted to censure McCarthy. This rather equivocal accomplishment is cited as a significant vindication of Eisenhower's strategy of passive unfriendliness. But by the time of the censure vote, the nation had watched two months' worth of Army-McCarthy hearings, a fearful price for the Army and its management to pay, for while McCarthy was publicly exhibiting his boorish behavior, the Secretary and the General Counsel of the Army were put through an extraordinary ordeal while the President who appointed them piously kept public hands off. It is hard to believe that public opinion would not have rallied behind Eisenhower at least as readily as it did behind the Army's attorney, Joseph Welch.

It is unclear to me whether Eisenhower's adamant refusal to move publicly against McCarthy was the product of his unwillingness to sacrifice any of his personal popularity with public opinion at large, or derived from a belief that in the face of presidential disapproval, Republicans in the Senate would rally to protect one of their own. Since some Senate Republicans, like Margaret Chase Smith and Ralph Flanders, were already leading anti-McCarthy figures, the plausibility of this latter belief is hard to credit. More likely, Eisenhower's public timidity kept Republican senatorial fence-sitters on the fence. It is also doubtful that Ike's popularity would have greatly suffered if he had gone after McCarthy in a more public way. In any event, the notion of a thoroughgoing anti-McCarthy Eisenhower strategy is inconsistent with the behind-the-scenes accommodations that Eisenhower permitted the State Department and the Army to make with McCarthy and his allies. There is an uncomfortable post-hoc quality in the "enough-rope" argument* that leads me to doubt that Eisenhower is entitled to as much credit for McCarthy's downfall as thoughtful scholars such as Greenstein are prepared to give him.

By common opinion among historians, the strongest case for the elite-Republican explanation of McCarthyism was made by Michael Rogin in *The Intellectuals and McCarthy* (1967), a book which won the Albert Beveridge Award of the American Historical Association. This book is primarily a thoroughgoing and convincing effort to discredit the notion that an inti-

* *The Hidden-Hand Presidency*, Basic Books, 286 pp., $16.95.

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mate connection existed between support for McCarthy and the American tradition of agrarian radicalism. In this interpretation, McCarthyism had no authentic populist roots and McCarthy no disproportionate number of populist followers. Rogin argues that the poll findings of support for McCarthy among the poorly educated, Catholics, and lower socioeconomic strata can be explained as agreement with McCarthy's anti-Communist rhetoric coupled with a lack of sophistication about the harmful effects of his methods. Thus he suggests that political attitudes beyond party loyalty structured the views of Americans toward McCarthy.

Rogin went beyond his interpretation of McCarthyism as an elite-Republican phenomenon, however, to offer a critique of the more general political views of those who held the earlier, mass-politics position. These writers were attacked as having arrived at the wrong analysis of McCarthyism because of irrational fears stemming from their belief in pluralistic politics and their consequent distrust of ordinary American people.

It should be evident that a broad sympathy for pluralism, even a fear of populism, ought not logically to preclude an analyst from adopting some theory of McCarthyism other than the mass-democracy/status-anxiety theory. Indeed, in one case, my own, that is what happened. So that part of Rogin's argument directed toward establishing a link between the political philosophies of analysts and their views of McCarthyism seems to me mistaken. This mistake, moreover, may have encumbered discourse about McCarthyism and retarded acceptance of the very position Rogin espoused by causing the scholars he attacked to feel that something other than the merit of their views of McCarthy was at stake.

THE late Richard Hofstadter, for one, expressed annoyance at the Republican-elite theory of McCarthyism:

> These conclusions [he said] that McCarthy appealed more to Republicans than to Democrats and that the right-wingers of the 1960's are overwhelmingly Republican in partisan affiliation—have the great advantage that they are likely to go ringing down the corridors of time unchallenged and unimpaired. They have an attractive solidity, but they do not offer an arresting new idea to our store of understanding.

It seems to me that on this unusual occasion Hofstadter's common sense deserted him. Why prefer ingenuity to veracity? Would he have praised those of us who invented a more plausible theory than his own as more original if we had accepted his ideas without question and omitted to probe farther? I never met Hofstadter and therefore never asked him about this issue, but have always suspected that his ungenerous response to what he conceded to be a better (though less arresting) theory arose because of a distaste at having his motives impugned. And so he persisted:

> What would be most pertinent would be to find out first what characteristics divide those Republicans who have joined the extreme Right from those who believe that it is a menace to the body politic, and what were the social characteristics of the rather substantial number of Democrats who were pro-McCarthy.

To my knowledge, in the five years that remained to him after he published those words Hofstadter never followed up his own suggestion. Had he done so, would his findings have shaken his conviction that political parties are so ephemeral and uninteresting an organizer of the political attitudes of Americans as the disdainful tone of his comment suggests?

Political extremism in the United States, of which the McCarthy episode is an example, is to this day not well understood. Students of the phenomenon are still searching for a way to explain why extremism sometimes gets a grip on the American body politic and why, equally mysteriously, that grip is sometimes relaxed. All three of the main theories of McCarthyism possess the virtue of focusing more upon the behavior of respondents to McCarthy than—as his biographers perforce have tended to do—on the particulars of what he said or thought or did. As among these theories, the elite-Republican explanation seems to me still to have the best of the argument. The strongest contemporary evidence sustains it, and it accords most readily with the rest of what we think we know about the ways in which elites use public opinion to constrain one another. It suggests that if we want to understand the ways in which extremism operates in American politics, we must understand the political incentives shaping the activities of more moderate actors, more centrally located in the system, who are in a position to use extremist demands and impulses to further their own ends.

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A Jewish Romance

A Story

Annette Henkin Landau

IN MY creative-writing class a young man has written a romance. He is a charming young man, with a sweet, candid smile that passes for honesty as well as anything else does in this class. It is not a class in which people criticize each other's work severely. Everyone likes everything that everybody writes, and everybody likes this romance.

We also like the young man, Jody, whose mother has come to class to hear him read his romance. And we are charmed with Jody's mother who has beautiful long black hair, and who, when Jody reads, swings her crossed leg nervously. Jody's mother does not mean this to be seductive, but it is.

It is a curious story, this romance. It takes place in a *shtetl* ("small town": Jody explains this to the class) and it concerns a young bride, Malka, her elderly husband, Itzhak, and her young lover, Stefan, who, through a combination of rape and seduction, relieves Malka of the virginity her husband has been unable to capture, and makes her pregnant. It is considered by the townsfolk to be a miracle.

The story requires a glossary. The rabbi studies Gemara, but the *hazzan* studies Kabbalah. A torchlight parade accompanies Malka to the *mikveh*. ("Purifying bath," explains Jody.) Stefan, Malka's blond giant of a lover, mad with passion at Malka's impending marriage to Itzhak, rampages through the local brothel. There he is offered food by the kindhearted madam, but Stefan turns it away. He does not eat *treyf*, only kosher. And so on.

The teacher wants to know what this story reminds us of. Dinesen, we say. Hardy. Singer.

Jody smiles sweetly at his mother. "I just wanted to write something Jewish," he says.

A voice from the back of the classroom: "Is there a market for such a story?"

It is going to be difficult, we agree. Maybe, because it is sexy, *Playboy*. Maybe, because it is Jewish, COMMENTARY.

The bell rings, the class breaks up. A group forms around Jody, who is radiant. Another around the teacher. Lottie, who sits next to me in class, tugs at my sleeve. Her hand trembles a little. "That story upsets me," she says. "You want to have a cup of coffee, a glass of wine? Do you have to go home?"

I look at my watch. It is a quarter to ten. When classes are over the streets vibrate with students, the bars fill, the Village pulses. "I never feel like going home," I tell Lottie.

Lottie is not really a writer. She is a Holocaust survivor who is writing her memories. When the Nazis came into Hungary Lottie was hidden in the household of a brave priest. She cleaned and cooked and pretended to learn to be a Christian. When the triumphant Russians marched into the town she rushed into the street with the other women and threw flowers at them. Free! Free!

They were all raped.

"Not because I was Jewish, you understand," says Lottie. "Because I was Hungarian."

"Some honor," I mutter through my teeth.

In '56, when the Hungarians had their revolution, she said to herself, "Lottie, maybe enough is already enough," and she walked out.

Lottie has almost no accent. Her hair is white and symmetrically waved on both sides of her face, like a movie star of the 1930's. She is serious and studious and she wears only black clothes. She is trying to write truthfully of her life, but editors send her rejection slips. "Sorry, no personal memoirs or survivor stories, please. We have too many of them."

Lottie and I head for Barley's. It's going to be noisy, but the food is good enough. We take a booth in the back and before we are settled in, Stella, who is in our class, joins us, and then Bonita. Stella is a retired history teacher. She has enormously wide hips and she squeezes in next to me. Bonita sits next to Lottie. We study the menu for calories.

"Are you going to have French fries again?" Bonita asks Stella. There is such wistfulness in her voice that we all crack up.

"Who cares?" says Stella. "You know what old means? It means never having to count calories."

But Bonita, who comes in from Cedarhurst in tight worn-out jeans (after stopping in the ladies room of the Long Island Railroad to pin her diamond ring inside her bra), orders raw clams. She has a big behind and fat thighs, she informs us,

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as though we can't see them. Lottie drinks black coffee and eats pastry. She never gets fat.

Bonita is writing a novel about a suburban housewife, a woman from Great Neck, who comes into the city once a week in search of the perfect orgy. But every time she finds one something goes wrong with it. One orgiast has a birthmark on his stomach. It turns her off. Another has a colostomy. Or she can't find the bathroom. Or she thinks she glimpses, beneath a tangle of squirming bodies, her brother. Or her husband's boss. And so on. The class can hardly wait for the next chapter.

"I'll have clams too," I say, "and a carafe of white wine. Maybe two is better."

"Two carafes," we tell the waitress.

Then we call her back. "One white and one red."

LOTTIE cannot wait to talk. "Tell me," she says, "what kind of a story is that? *Kallehs* and *mikvehs* and *davening* and *shaitels* and *talesim* and nobody in the story is really Jewish. A bunch of pagans. Why does he write such a story? For his mother?"

"Lottie," says Stella, laughing, "what's Jewish?"

Lottie's eyes are glistening. Her rimless glasses make her look tremulous. "Dearest Stella," she says, "in Hungary if you did not know what was Jewish the Hungarians were happy to tell you. And if not the Hungarians, the Germans. And if not the Germans, the Russians. I know what's Jewish. Not that story."

The wine has arrived and we are drinking it. "My God," says Bonita, "they raped you." She shudders.

"Let's talk about Jody's story," I say. I have a long trip home and rape makes me nervous.

"A brothel," says Lottie. "Whoever heard of a brothel in a *shtetl*? With unkosher food. I never heard of such a thing."

Stella's laugh is so loud you can hear it above the juke box, which is playing "You Really Got Me," by The Kinks. "There's a Yiddish word for prostitute, Lottie. *Nafkeh*. So there must have been prostitutes or they wouldn't need a word."

"They weren't Jewish."

"I thought we were going to talk about the story," I say.

"We're talking about the story," says Bonita. "We are also talking about life."

"It's a very literary story," I say. "It's derivative."

"You said you liked it," accuses Bonita. "Why weren't you honest?"

My feelings are hurt. "I was honest," I say. "I did like it. I said it reminded me of Turgenev."

We laugh. The wine is having its effect.

"Next week, when I read my story," says Stella, "you can say it reminds you of Chekhov."

"No," I say, "Maupassant, maybe, not Chekhov."

"Stella," says Bonita, a raw clam hanging from her fork, "will you trade me a French fry for a clam?"

Stella holds out her plate and we each take a French fry. Bonita takes two.

"It's a bizarre story," says Lottie. "The people are bizarre."

"I met some bizarre Jews in Greece last summer," says Stella. "A whole family."

I signal the waitress. "Maybe you could turn down the volume," I say, "we're talking." She is a young waitress, very pretty, probably an actress. She shrugs elaborately, as if I'm crazy. "I'll find out," she says.

"On a tour bus," says Stella, "one of those day tours from Athens to Delphi. A mother, a father, and two teen-aged sons. I called them 'the family from Scarsdale.' "

Stella is funny. "Your classes must have loved you," I say. "I bet you were a great teacher."

"Not bad," she says modestly.

"What about the family from Scarsdale?" says Bonita.

"The boys were gorgeous. Curly hair, muscular thighs, perfect bronze bodies, high-school wrestler types. They wore denim shorts, the kind that are all frazzled around the edges, like you can't afford a needle and thread. And that's all. No shirts. No shoes."

"No shoes?" says Lottie, scandalized. "In a bus? I'd have made them wear shoes if I were their mother."

"No, you wouldn't," Bonita says darkly, raiding Stella's French fries.

"What about the mother and father?" I say.

"She looked too young to be their mother. Too perfect. Every once in a while one of the sons would turn around and berate her, 'If it wasn't for you we could be getting a suntan,' and she would cast her eyes up to heaven. Then the sons would cast their eyes up to imitate her and she would laugh as if she were used to being treated contemptuously."

"And the father?" says Lottie.

"The father! He sat in a different part of the bus. He didn't talk to any of them. He had one of those hair-stylist haircuts, with little drops of brilliantine, or something, and he carried a pocketbook. I think he was coming out of the closet."

We are silent. "Stella," I say after a while, "you're making this up. It's next week's story."

"No," says Stella, "there were all kinds of characters on that bus. Behind me were two men who argued about everything, complicated, legalistic arguments. I called them 'the disbarred lawyer and the defrocked rabbi.' And in front of me were two girls."

"Women," says Bonita.

"Women. Young women. They were talking about the problems of women traveling alone, so I listened. The one next to the window I couldn't see, of course, but the one on the aisle had a big oily nose and a shapeless kind of shape. I called her Golda.

"Golda was saying Israeli men were the worst, if

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you didn't count the Egyptians. Her friend said no, the Italians were the worst. In Italy, she said, if you have one leg, some bozo runs after you on the street to tell you that even the Madonna doesn't have such a beautiful leg. They giggled over that and the one next to the window leaned forward and I saw freckles and hair the color of marmalade.

"But not the Greeks, they agreed. Greeks treat women with respect."

"They do?" says Bonita. "I never heard that."

"Greeks never pay any attention to women," says Stella. "They're always in the cafés, talking politics and dancing with each other. Once in a while a Greek woman comes tearing out of her house, raises her fists to heaven, and shouts, 'Women! Daughters! Never marry a Greek!' "

"That's what Socrates' wife did," I say.

"Anyway, these two young women were talking, comparing their experiences, and pretty soon I realized that they didn't really know each other, they just happened to be sitting together. Golda, it turned out, was from Canton, Ohio, and the redhead was Canadian. So they started to compare American men and Canadians."

"What's the difference?" Bonita asks.

"Turns out not much. Canadians say 'aboot.' But then Golda started to laugh in a very surprised way. It was a special kind of laugh, deliberately rippling and cultivated, full of astonishment."

"A chairperson laugh," I suggest.

"Yes. She kept saying, 'You're not. Oh, I can't believe it. Really, I never would have guessed.' "

"The other girl said she was Jewish," says Lottie.

"That's what I thought."

"Golda was giving her a compliment," says Lottie. "That's what Americans always say, 'You don't look Jewish.' It's supposed to be something wonderful."

"You look like a New England schoolteacher, Lottie," I say.

"The priest could never have saved me if I didn't."

A pause. "Where is that waitress?" I say. "I want her to turn that damned thing down."

But the waitress is not in sight and Stella continues her story.

"WELL, the bus finally got to Delphi. Have you ever been to Greece in July? The heat sits on you. I got out of the bus and lugged myself up the mountainside, tripping over all kinds of sanctified rubble, and there on the ruins are the boys from Scarsdale, one of them posing, eyes closed, with his face to the sun, and the other one turns to the mother, who isn't even sweating in her linen sundress, and says spitefully, 'Now, are you satisfied? It's just a bunch of rocks.' "

"Imagine," says Bonita.

"He was right. You make this pilgrimage in a rinky-dink bus and the guide is snotty and the air conditioning doesn't work. And then there are those stark crags against that blue sky and the olive groves stretching like a green sea at your feet. If you had any breath left the beauty of that place would take it away. But the sanctuary is nothing but a pile of broken rocks."

"You're supposed to be able to visualize it, Stella," I say, "the way it used to be. You're a historian."

"I tried," says Stella, "I *shlepped* my fat legs up the Sacred Way, and thought about all those ancient people who used to do the same thing, just so they could ask a crazy old lady how they should run their lives. They didn't even have buses."

"I wonder what they asked her," Lottie says.

"The usual things," says Stella. "What should I do about my son who doesn't listen to me? How can I find the bracelet my husband gave me before he discovers I lost it? Cure me of cancer. Tell me how to live a meritorious life. The same things we ask."

"The Oracle knew all that?" asks Lottie.

"She went into a trembling ecstasy and talked in gibberish and the priest interpreted what she had said. If you were a woman, of course, you couldn't go near her."

"Sounds like my psychiatrist," Bonita says.

"It must have worked pretty well," says Stella. "They did it for about a thousand years."

The white wine is finished, so we start on the red. "Did you ever find out if the Canadian girl was Jewish?" I ask Stella.

"Oh. I was trying to climb a path up to the stadium when I met her coming down. She said she had turned back, it was too far. Golda, of course, was still climbing. So we sat down together on a rock overlooking a chasm to rest. She was a pretty young woman, sharp little features and big hazel eyes. Her name was Alison Cohen. She was a laboratory technician."

"My daughter is in medical school," says Bonita, running her finger around the edge of the glass to see if it would ring. I cast a sharp eye at her. The last train back to Cedarhurst is at one o'clock and I think she is getting drunk.

"Alison said she wasn't going back on the bus with us, she was spending the night in Delphi at the hotel. She wanted to go out to the sanctuary at daybreak and feel the presence of the god. So I said, 'He's dead, Cookie, he doesn't live here any more,' but she said he was a god of peace and reconciliation and she intended to seek him.

"I wasn't so happy that this kid is going out there all alone at dawn. I figured she might run into one of those Greeks who are so respectful to women, so I gave her a little history lesson. 'You know, I said, the Pythia—the old woman through whom the Oracle spoke—sent out a final message. She said, "The sanctuary has fallen to the ground and Phoebus Apollo has neither a hut nor a laurel leaf to his name, and even the prophetic waters have been silenced. Everything here is dead." '

"But she didn't listen to me any more than my students did. She asked me did I know that the

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Pythia sat on a tripod and opened her body to the intoxicating vapors. 'It was pot,' she said.

"I told her that's a discredited theory and she gave me the sweetest smile possible and said, 'Well, I'm going to believe it anyway.' I don't understand what she thought she would find out there. There's no place more final than where a god has died."

"What happened to her?" says Lottie.

"I don't know. The trip she was taking was a bachelor party she was giving herself. She said she was going back to Toronto to get married."

"My daughter is getting married," says Bonita. "She's marrying a doctor."

Suddenly we drop everything. We are full of gurgles and *mazel tovs*. A doctor! Bonita's daughter is marrying a doctor!

"Her daughter will also be a doctor," Lottie reminds us. "How do you do that on the envelope, doctor and doctor?"

"She's keeping her own name," says Bonita. But we don't want to discuss that, we want to hear about the wedding.

Bonita stares at the ceiling. "I don't want to talk about the wedding."

"He isn't Jewish," says Lottie.

"Not Jewish?" says Bonita, suddenly awake. "He's one of those doctors who can't operate without his *yarmulke*."

("Skull cap," explains Jody.)

"Your daughter is marrying a Jewish doctor and you don't want to talk about the wedding!" I say.

Bonita's eyes fill with tears. "I have nothing to say about it. They're planning the whole thing with their guru."

"A Jewish guru?" says Lottie, uncertainly.

"A rabbi from the West Side of Manhattan. In the eighties. He's a friend of the groom. They have a group that meets in his apartment. They dance. They sing."

"So what's wrong with that?" says Stella.

"The women have to sit separately. I can't even invite my CR group. There would be a riot."

("Consciousness-raising," explains Jody.)

"And that's not all. My daughter says I have to lead her seven times around the groom. His mother too."

"You're kidding," says Stella.

Bonita fills her glass to the brim. The carafe is empty. "I told her," she says, looking into the glass and feeling in her bra to make sure the ring is still there, "that his mother could go around him fourteen times and leave me out of it entirely." She drains the glass.

"What did she say?"

"She said I don't have to come to the wedding."

We sigh. Daughters.

"And that's not all. You know what the groom is wearing to the wedding?"

We are silent.

"A shroud."

I look at Lottie. She shrugs. "An old custom," she says. "It's a white coat called a *kittel*. Men wear it at the wedding and then not again until they are buried in it."

Stella looks stunned. "I never heard of that," she says.

A FEW drops of wine are left at the bottom of the carafes. Bonita pours them both, the white and the red, into her glass and swallows. "Rosé," she says, and puts her curly head down on the table. We shake her, but she seems to be asleep.

"What do you think she should do about the wedding?" says Stella.

We think about it.

"Maybe," says Lottie in her perfect accent, "she could lead the torchlight parade to the *mikveh*."

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The Hollywood & Other Quartets

Samuel Lipman

UNTIL now chamber music has been booming, or exploding, to choose only two of the military metaphors so often invoked. The proof is in the numbers. A 1981 publication of the National Endowment for the Arts, citing a spokesman for an advocacy group, painted a rosy picture:

> Droves of young musicians around the country are turning to careers in chamber music. There are now more than 1,000 chamber music groups, according to Benjamin Dunham, executive director of Chamber Music America. "More and more talented musicians who would otherwise have gone into symphony orchestras, teaching jobs, or solo careers are now gravitating toward chamber music and creating their own audiences through the force of their own personalities, their energy, their hustle, their exciting programming, and their excellent playing."

And indeed, wherever one looks one finds more small ensembles playing more pieces than ever before in our musical history. What holds true on the amateur level, where more or less accomplished enthusiasts play for fun, is paralleled by similar prosperity in schools, where groups ranging from brass and woodwind quintets to string trios and quartets are being joined "in residence" by combinations (on occasion exotic) of any of these traditional instruments with piano and/or percussion.

At the pinnacle of all this activity, it goes without saying, are those ensembles actually playing numerous concerts, for sizable fees, to audiences across the country. Among such groups are two brass quintets, the American and the Empire, and the Beaux Arts Trio, which has won a large following for its performances of the piano-trio literature. But whatever the success of these interesting combinations, the greatest public renown is, as always, reserved for the traditional string quartet. This combination of two violins, viola, and cello has been hallowed not just by time; it is the medium for performing what many believe to be the greatest body of music ever written: the string quartets of Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, and Schubert. Of course there are also countless lesser but still imposing works by such composers as Schumann, Brahms, and Dvořák in the 19th century, as well as major efforts by Bartók, Schoenberg, and Shostakovich (and their many disciples and opponents) in the 20th.

Several highly publicized groups occupy the string-quartet spotlight in America today. At their head, by a combination of longevity and the kind of eternal youth which comes from periodically replacing all the players save the original first violinist, stands the Juilliard Quartet. This ensemble, founded in 1946 and associated with the famous music school in New York of the same name, has specialized from its inception in exciting and energetic performances of a modern repertory beginning with Bartók and Schoenberg and extending as far forward as the last two quartets of the American composer Elliott Carter. All this material the Juilliard has recorded, often more than once, first for RCA and then more recently for Columbia (now called CBS).

Next to the Juilliard in fame is the Guarneri Quartet. This group of experienced musicians—the first violinist was an assistant concertmaster of the Cleveland Orchestra under George Szell, and the cellist was a member of the New Music Quartet, which did many contemporary works during the 1940's and 1950's—is associated in the current academic year with the University of Maryland. Though it has played some contemporary music, it tends to eschew the problematic in favor of the solid classics of the repertory. It has a large following, and receives high fees for its many appearances. It is also the subject of a light-hearted but withal adoring book* written by a *New Yorker* staff member, much of which first appeared in that magazine.

On a somewhat lower level of status is the Cleveland Quartet, whose members all teach at the Eastman School of Music in Rochester. Recording, as does the Guarneri, for RCA, the Cleveland projects an appealing air of youthfulness. Equal to the Cleveland in popularity and activity is the Tokyo Quartet, whose original members (despite the name of the group) were all trained at Juilliard. Now for the first time with a non-Japanese member, the Tokyo is billed as an American ensemble.

There are many more quartets which are somewhat less active and well-known. An older group, affiliated with Columbia University, is the Composers Quartet; it has specialized in contemporary music, venturing somewhat beyond the Juilliard in both degree of concentration on the new and perhaps in the intellectual difficulty of the works performed. Among the younger groups are the Concord, which has recently won attention for its playing of the complete cycle of the Beethoven quartets, and the Emer-

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* *Quartet: A Profile of the Guarneri Quartet*, by Helen Drees Ruttencutter. Lippincott and Crowell, 1980.

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son, whose performances of Bartók have similarly brought it to recent notice. There are, in addition, permanent groups being formed (and, one assumes, breaking up) all the time, as well as many *ad hoc* ensembles, some organized by schools out of available faculty members, others the creation of such presenting organizations as New York's Lincoln Center and the 92nd Street Y. These last, essentially audience-oriented, attractions tend to concentrate on a wide choice of well-liked material played, as in the case of Lincoln Center's Chamber Music Society, by different instrumental combinations, rather than on the string-quartet literature by itself. A new trend, though one with solid historical roots, consists of first-chair symphony players appearing under the name of the orchestra in chamber-music concerts; the possibility of such performance opportunities is often an attractive condition of orchestra employment.

IT IS fashionable to point out that chamber music in general, and string-quartet playing in particular, inevitably suffer from a built-in economic handicap. Though the number of players used is small, the audiences for which such concerts are given are also small as compared to those who patronize opera companies, symphony orchestras, and star recitalists. The houses in which chamber music is played are rarely very large, and devotees of the art are reluctant to allow the music they love and the ensembles they cherish to be presented in roomy but always more distant-sounding environments. Indeed, to do so would be to sacrifice the major selling point advanced on behalf of chamber music: its intimacy.

So chamber music, on this analysis at least, needs large amounts of money for its survival. Since that money cannot be generated at the box office, it must come from subsidies. As in the past, some of the burden can be, and is, borne by schools and institutions. Some too is borne by such profit-making activities—usually well-attended recital series—as still remain in serious music. But school budgets face increasing demands and declining revenues. Musical institutions are themselves always confronting higher labor, administrative, and plant costs. And the fees for star soloists have increased well beyond the rate of inflation, with the resultant loss of the profits from celebrity appearances which could formerly be used to support concerts of more limited appeal. It must be said too that the older kind of music patronage, in which one individual would underwrite a group, is now extinct.

In the case of chamber music, the new money needed has come from a coalition of private-sector philanthropy based on nonprofit foundations and corporations, and an increasingly effective governmental support program. In the 1981 fiscal year, for example, the National Endowment for the Arts granted a total of $476,200 for chamber music (including $23,000 for a program of chamber-music advocacy run by Chamber Music America). In themselves these grants were too small and too widely distributed to be decisive. But as an indication of federal-government approval, they helped to raise vastly larger sums from donors who otherwise might have given less or not have given at all.

The corollary of all the money going into chamber music is, of course, the money being taken out. Not only are administrators being supported in the style to which they have quickly become accustomed; even the artists themselves are sharing in the vastly larger pie. As recently as thirty-five years ago, the Budapest Quartet—perhaps the most famous and respected such group of the century—played concerts for a fee of $800; even this fee was often cut in half by a foundation subsidy. Today the Guarneri Quartet gets more than $5,000, and the Juilliard gets about the same. And when top fees go up, the effect is to raise other fees all down the line.

HAS the recent prosperity of chamber music produced a golden age of performance? The reviewers certainly seem to think so: every day we read about the "deepest insight" into this, the "greatest performance" of that. But for a sophisticated listener with access to the wealth of chamber-music recordings of the past, the notion that everyone is playing better and better every day in every way can sound hollow indeed.

Just how hollow this notion is may be gauged from a consideration of the recorded legacy of the Hollywood Quartet, perhaps the best string quartet ever to have been assembled in America. The Hollywood is now largely forgotten in this country, and does not even merit its own entry in the *New Grove Dictionary*, the music world's book of life. Yet from its founding in 1948 to 1961, when it disbanded, the Hollywood made more than twenty recordings for Capitol, a Southern California firm later to become the American subsidiary of the English giant EMI. Now EMI has followed up a recent reissue in England of the group's performance of works by Schubert, Brahms, Dvořák, and Smetana* with a four-record set of all the late Beethoven string quartets.†

Unpropitious as the name of our old movie capital might be for a string quartet, in the case of the Hollywood it had the substantial merit of accuracy. During the group's existence, all its members were studio musicians busily and successfully playing soundtracks written to order by composers gifted at being pleasing rather than memorable. But it must not be thought that the Hollywood Quartet players were without serious musical credentials. First violinist Felix Slatkin, for example, was a pupil of Efrem Zimbalist and also studied conducting with Fritz Reiner at the Curtis Institute. Second violinist Paul Shure was a leading member of Stokowski's All-American Youth Orchestra in the early 40's, and is now the concertmaster of the Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra, one of the best (and most refined) such groups in the United States, if not in the world today.

BECAUSE of studio commitments, the Hollywood's concert activities

* EMI HMV RLS 765.
† EMI HMV RLS 7707.

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were largely confined to the Pacific coast. Around 1950, however, they began to record. The first of their discs to appear coupled the Sixth Quartet of the Brazilian composer Heitor Villa-Lobos with the English William Walton's Quartet in A-minor. It was immediately apparent from this record that the ensemble possessed both personality and a sense of style. The playing was at once suave and brilliant, and the vastly different characteristics of the two composers—Villa-Lobos dark-hued and soulful, Walton linear and reserved *à l'anglaise*—were clearly limned.

With their next record, the group engaged (with the addition of a second viola) the great Schubert Quintet in C-major. Here were established the typical outlines of a Hollywood performance: energy along with rock-solid rhythm, melodic sweetness combined with absolute decorum and gravity. Here too was a conception of Schubert which emphasized musical design and structural coherence rather than Viennese charm. The sweetness came from a virtuoso style of string playing perhaps influenced by the ever-reserved musicality and technical brilliance of a fellow resident of Southern California, Jascha Heifetz.

Though the Hollywood Quartet was to play a relatively limited amount of contemporary music, another of their early records demonstrated once again their gifts in this field. To Paul Hindemith's Third Quartet the Hollywood brought every necessary virtue of polyphonic clarity without ever losing the ability to play each melodic line as if it had been written for a beautiful human voice. If the group's performance, on the record's reverse side, of the Prokofiev Second Quartet seemed both softened in outline and somewhat lacking in drive, the fault perhaps lay as much with the work's essential aridity as with the players' execution.

Something of the high seriousness the Hollywood Quartet could achieve at its best is amply conveyed by the group's recording of one of the cornerstones of the repertory, the Schubert Quartet in D-minor, better known as "Death and the Maiden." Here the performing miracle resides in the perfection of the playing, consisting in secure intonation and rhythmic precision. Comparison with the recorded performances of two historically great quartets, the Busch in 1936 and the Budapest in 1953, places the Hollywood, for all the musical virtues of the others, in a class by itself.

Elsewhere, in works of Hugo Wolf, Joaquin Turina, the American Paul Creston, and the piano quintets of Brahms and Franck, the Hollywood seems content to play with a kind of dutiful musicality, without the urgency which marks their most vital performances. Sometimes, as in their playing (with an extra viola and cello) of the sextet version of Schoenberg's *Verklärte Nacht*, this attitude of essential noninvolvement emerges as the kind of sentimentality which the underside of Hollywood movie music so regularly conveyed.

No such lapses, however, mar the Hollywood recordings of the late Beethoven quartets. Here, playing the greatest music, and arrayed as an ensemble against the phonographic performances of the best groups of the century, the Hollywood emerges at the top.

In order to appreciate the particular achievement of the Hollywood Quartet, it is first necessary to understand something about the music in which they have so triumphed. These works are extremely difficult to play. To get the notes in tune and at the right time is a virtuoso task for the best players; the *Grosse Fuge* in particular often seems impossible in its demands on force and endurance. But merely to solve these technical problems—and few quartets get even this far—is to leave unsolved the question these works above all others pose: how much "interpretation" does the music need, and even allow?

There has always been a tendency for performers to think that though undistinguished music (and especially trash) plays itself, masterpieces require bounteous contributions direct from the executant's soul. While this attitude is no doubt comforting to celebrity egos, the fact remains that Beethoven's late music is luxuriantly marked with performing directions covering phrasing, dynamics, tempo, rhythmic structure, note lengths, and even affective character. The problem is that these directions come not only close together in the music but even, several of them, at the same time. It thus becomes tempting—sometimes unavoidable—for performers to interfere with the flow by taking extra time to implement the correct degrees of loudness and softness, to obey the indicated tempo changes, to make clear the proper phrase lengths and endings. So adaptable is the human mind that this use of extra time as a crutch is considered "breathing," and therefore in itself an admirable element of the performers' conception.

Contemporary music-making is shot through with just such distortions in the performance of great works. Sometimes these and other distortions go by the name of personality; in the case of fairly recondite chamber works, they pass as profundity. Such too is the case in today's playing of the Beethoven quartets. Whether the group in question is the Juilliard, the Guarneri, or the Cleveland, or their numerous satellities, followers, and imitators, the goal of every performance is the same: to inflect each note, to fill each sound with "beauty," "musicality," and "insight." Some groups doubtless play better than others, but the result is the same: manner replaces content, stylistic devices replace the work's own individuality, and the performers replace the composer.

From all this, the Hollywood Quartet is mercifully free. To say that they perform Beethoven without distortion is by no means to imply that they thereby lack commitment to and comprehension of the music. It is the fashion in some quarters to deride the emotional and mental faculties of performers; Igor Stravinsky, for example, cared little for their feelings, and thought that very few had much of a mind. With the Hollywood Quartet we are always confident that they have placed their emotions at the service of Beethoven, and have tried to use their minds to comprehend and perform his instructions.

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This is perfectly clear from the first chords of the Hollywood performance of the opus 127, the first of the late Beethoven quartets. So difficult are these chords to play in tune, and properly voiced with the top notes audible, that they can serve as a quick litmus test of a group's abilities. In preparation for this article I listened to fourteen performances of this opening;* only from the Hollywood Quartet could the chords be heard with the vital top notes clearly present, and in tune. As the first movement unfolds, it becomes evident that the Hollywood is capable of following Beethoven's directions without making things easy for itself. Throughout the changing tempos, the flow is continuous, and the ending is softly graceful without any hesitation. The melodically glorious slow movement is nobly played, with the triplets broadly measured; always there is a long line without any sentimentality. In the third movement the *pizzicati* are marvelously together, and the difficult *Presto* is perfectly executed. The final movement ends as the first had begun, with perfectly played chords.

In opus 130 the *Allegro* is marked by perfect balance of the instruments under trying conditions; the slow passages, as always with the Hollywood in this music, are noble, and again there is no sign of tempo modification as a means of executing extreme dynamic contrasts. Everywhere the delicacy in *pianissimo* playing is remarkable. The *Presto* second movement is truly fast without being rushed; the following *Andante* is always deeply serious, with no outward striving for a "musical" effect. The fourth movement, *Alla danza tedesca* ("in the style of a German dance"), performed without obtrusive gusts of sound, keeps the bar structure correct in the face of the superficial temptations arising from the dynamic and phrase markings. The penultimate *Cavatina* is always grave in expression; even the passage marked *beklemmt* ("anguished," "oppressed") does not break the classical bounds of the movement. And the final *Allegro,* incredibly fast and light, never loses its solid tonal presence.

The seven-movement opus 131 is perhaps the most abstruse (along with the *Grosse Fuge*) of all the late quartets. Wisely the Hollywood Quartet refrains from an intrusion of performing personality.† In the opening *Adagio ma non troppo e molto espressivo,* the tempo, despite its slowness, always seems right; the following *Allegro* is again thrillingly fast and light. After the short *Allegro moderato* third movement, the subsequent *Andante ma non troppo* is delicate and throbbing, with perfectly accurate phrasing from the first violin. At the end of this movement, so simply played, the beauties seem totally straightforward; there is no trace of the impression one so often has in listening to this music that the players are undergoing a marvelous public experience. The fifth movement, *Presto,* delicate and light even when loud, is marked by the playing of perfectly-in-tune octaves between the instruments. The short sixth movement, *Adagio,* is followed with the final *Allegro,* played brusquely but never ripped off; the ending (before the last, loud, chords) is once more a miracle of delicacy.

In opus 132, Beethoven seems more human without being at any time less weighty. In the opening *Assai sostenuto—Allegro,* the Hollywood responds to the music with deeply felt and sonorous playing, again manifesting impeccable intonation and technical ease. The quasi-Musette in the subsequent *Allegro ma non tanto* is both sinuous and airy. The slow movement, *Molto adagio,* bears Beethoven's own German title: *Heiliger Dankgesang eines Genesenen an die Gottheit, in der lydischen Tonart*—"Sacred song of thanks of a convalescent to the Godhead, in the Lydian Mode." In the Hollywood performance the essential quality of the music is properly an elevated simplicity, with the section marked by Beethoven *Neue Kraft fühlend*—"Feeling new strength"—touchingly gay. The following *Alla marcia* leads into the final *Allegro appassionato,* wherein the Hollywood demonstrates, as it has throughout these works, the rarest ability to be straightforwardly expressive within a disciplined framework. The closing *Presto* section, reached via an accelerando the Hollywood manages with stunning neatness, ends with a feverish exaltation few performing groups in any epoch can manage.

So DIFFICULT is the *Grosse Fuge*—originally the finale of opus 130 but later detached by Beethoven from the longer work and given its own opus number of 133—that performance lapses are easily (and often) explained. Indeed, listening to a number of recorded versions of this less than twenty-minute work is, for a critic, a worthwhile lesson in charity.** But the Hollywood has no need of such indulgence. Precise and strong rhythm, flagging only in some difficult viola syncopations during the first third of the piece, almost flawless intonation, rock-solid bass lines played by the marvelous cellist, Eleanor Aller (first-violinist Slatkin's wife), always clear part playing,†† forcefulness without

* Amadeus, Budapest (1952), Budapest (stereo), Busch, Concord (1980 broadcast), Guarneri, Hollywood, Hungarian, Juilliard (CBS), Juilliard (1979 broadcast), La Salle, Quartetto Italiano, Vienna Konzerthaus, and Yale.

† What the result of giving into this temptation sounds like is all too clear from a recording (*Deutsche Grammophon* 2531 077) of Leonard Bernstein conducting the Vienna Philharmonic string section in a transcription of the work; the rendition, dedicated to the memory of Bernstein's wife, comes with the liner note that "Mr. Bernstein feels that this performance is the proudest conducting achievement of his life." A listener with somewhat more distance from the emotions involved might well feel that here the nightmare of musical alchemy has been realized: Beethoven at his greatest has been transformed into bad Mahler.

** There is, unfortunately, no recording of the *Grosse Fuge* by the much admired Busch Quartet. The earliest performance to which I have listened is by the Budapest Quartet with close to its original personnel. This recording, which dates from before 1930, is an example of how a quartet with a great reputation can be unmanned by this work. I have also listened to recordings, all more or less unsatisfactory, by the following groups: Amadeus, Budapest (1952), Budapest (stereo), Guarneri, Juilliard (CBS), Hungarian, Quartetto Italiano, and Yale.

†† In the *Grosse Fuge,* more than in any other Hollywood recording, one regrets the absence of stereo, valuable as it is for the clarification of dense polyphonic lines. The remastering of the original tape for the present English reissue may provide a decided improvement.

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forcing: all these virtues are crowned by a vanishingly rare feeling for tempo relationships. It is this comprehension of the interlocking nature of Beethoven's many sections which perhaps more than anything else distinguishes the Hollywood performances.

Opus 135, the last of the late quartets and the last complete work Beethoven was to write, is a happy and even jocular farewell to music. So far from being the hitherto unexplored musical territory the composer explored in other works from opus 127 onward, opus 135 seems almost classical, particularly in its deceptively unassuming first movement.

But even here Beethoven's many interpretative directions can, in a mediocre performance, conflict with each other and destroy the momentum of the music. As always, the Hollywood goes ahead without any sacrifice of either expressivity or accuracy. The performance of the opening *Allegretto* manages to be, as written, in two rather than the customary four; the rhythmically difficult *scherzo* is again distinguished by remarkable cello playing; the *Lento assai, cantante e tranquillo,* so easy for other and lesser groups to ham up by dragging and obtrusive phrasing, is in the Hollywood performance worthy to stand beside the noblest vocal works of Gluck. And the last movement, with Beethoven's questioning musical motto *Muss es sein?*—"Must it be?"—followed by the decisive *Es muss sein!*—"It must be!"—ends with a perfectly played *pizzicato* passage expressing not just honorable resignation after a lifetime's work, but even joyous acceptance.

WITH this triumph the recording career of the Hollywood Quartet came to an end. But the evidence of its achievement endures, making clear that great artists can survive even when they earn their bread in the environs of mass entertainment, and that great art lives in a world prior to, and way beyond, the welter of fund-raising galas, subscription drives, and just plain huckstering we now call the life of culture.

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The Energy Debate

THE WAR AGAINST THE ATOM. By SAMUEL MCCRACKEN. *Basic Books. 206 pp. $18.50.*

NUCLEAR POWER: BOTH SIDES. Edited by MICHIO KAKU and JENNIFER TRAINER. *Norton. 279 pp. $14.95.*

NUKESPEAK. By STEPHEN HILGARTNER, RICHARD C. BELL, RORY O'CONNOR. *Sierra Club. 282 pp. $14.95.*

Reviewed by ROGER STARR

ANYONE old enough to remember Hiroshima will also remember that in the welter of conflicting emotions stimulated by the destruction of that city through atomic power came one particular ray of hope—the hope that this immense power could be put to work for peaceful purposes. For many Americans today (though not for most) that hope has faded. Of all the dreams that were entertained for atomic energy, there remains only one area in which it has been used on a wide scale with major beneficial results, and that is in the generation of electricity.

But even this, of course, one would hardly know from reading the daily press, since the heat generated by nuclear fission also warms public debate. Particularly in the United States, controversy rages over the value of nuclear-power plants when weighed against their costs and risks. The three books considered here present the alternative points of view on this subject, with varying degrees of success.

Samuel McCracken's *The War Against the Atom* is pro-nuclear. It argues that using nuclear fission to power the production of electricity offers industrialized civilization the cheapest, safest, and environmentally most desirable method of continuing and improving upon our material standard of living. McCracken takes up the objections to nuclear power, and answers them. He also compares nuclear power with its competitors, and finds in its favor. Finally he peers into the future of atomic electric power.

In *Nuclear Power: Both Sides,* Michio Kaku and Jennifer Trainer take no position on the value or danger of nuclear power. Rather, under headings defined by the more important subjects of public debate, they present the pro and con sides of the atomic "war." The battlegrounds are radioactivity, reactor safety, economics, waste disposal, and societal consequences. The firepower on both sides is heavy; as might be expected, however, the quality of the essays is uneven.

As for *Nukespeak,* it is a frankly anti-nuclear book that ostensibly makes its case against nuclear power simply by quoting and highlighting some of the more far-fetched and ridiculous things that supporters of nuclear power have said.

WHERE *Nukespeak* is couched in the shrill tones of the young reporter on the trail of a miscreant public official, Samuel McCracken in *The War Against the Atom* takes the reader gently by the hand, and with only a mild push on the back from time to time, guides him through the attacks on nuclear power to a fair appraisal of why its dangers are not excessive. Of course there *are* dangers, but as McCracken demonstrates, the dangers are greater in almost every other industrial process that seeks to harness energy, from erecting dams and living downstream of them, to mining coal and breathing the effluent of the chimneys beneath which it is burned. There are dangers in drilling for oil in the Gulf of Mexico, and in burning it, or in burning natural gas. Just recently a fire has been raging in an oil-fired power plant in Venezuela, and 40 or 60 people have been killed; whichever the number, it exceeds by exactly that amount the number of people who have been killed by radiation in commercial nuclear-power plants in the United States, where 72 such plants are licensed to operate.

McCracken discusses the several types of reactors in common use, and those still in an experimental stage. He sets forth fairly the objections made to them. He describes the risks of radioactivity and compares the reality with the popular misconceptions that gain credence in the press. He discusses the problems of waste disposal and plant decommissioning with a patience that probably reflects the fact that he is not a physicist at all, but a humanistic scholar who went into the subject in detail because he wanted to find out about it for himself. He passes along his discoveries in a lucid exposition that makes clear to the nonspecialist reader what McCracken has first taken the pains to make clear to himself.

Underlying McCracken's cogent refutations of the anti-nuclear arguments are several assumptions which, to me at least, seem self-evidently true. Thus, he postulates that people all over the world desire to maintain or to better their material standard of living. He assumes that people will choose a mode of generating electricity on the basis of economy, not politics, and therefore that a society will elect what is cheapest, least likely to depend on exhaustible raw materials, and least likely to require special skills on the part of the normal user. He does not believe a society will knowingly choose a pattern of electric generation that involves a high degree of human dispersal and the decentralization of economic relationships, or simply because the raw materials involved happen to be unattractive to terrorists. The counterarguments put forward by some anti-nuclear critics are either simply wrong in their description of the technology or else they are not arguments at all, but expressions of a desire for a simpler world.

McCracken devotes considerable space to examining alternative sources of power. Particularly effective is his indictment of coal and its problems, including the dangers to life and health it poses and its technological challenges, especially

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in the area of keeping the air clean and disposing of the vastly greater amounts of solid waste produced by coal as compared with nuclear power. He challenges the advocates of the sun, both as a direct source of heat and as an indirect source of motive power through wind. He discusses the shortcomings of oil, a problematic source both because of its limited supply and because of the political and other noneconomic constraints that limit access even to the supply that exists.

In a remarkably fair gallery of portraits, McCracken explores and systematically refutes the views of the major opponents of nuclear power. (One of these is Dr. John Gofman, the most persistent and best-qualified critic of the dangers of radioactivity, whose own views are set forth in *Nuclear Power: Both Sides*, where they are also, less effectively, rebutted.) I stress the fairness of McCracken's appraisals of those with whom he disagrees because it contrasts so sharply with the tone in which the authors of *Nukespeak* characterize the pro-nuclear figures whom they catch in exaggerations or misstatements (or whose words they simply garble and distort).

WHAT McCracken for all his valiant effort cannot do is wholly allay the residual fears connected with nuclear power. But perhaps no one can. In part these spring from irrational premises that lie beyond effective refutation, based as they are on a revulsion against technology itself.*

The fear of something going wrong inside the steel reactor, into which no one can look, defies rational analysis because the nuclear process itself seems to awaken a sense of guilt over tampering with nature's ultimate secrets, a feeling that intensifies the essentially reasonable fear that something *might* go wrong, allowing radioactivity to escape and wreak a horrible revenge. McCracken deals with this matter calmly, admitting the possibility of a terrible accident, just as there is a possibility that Manhattan Island could suffer a horrendous earthquake, but pointing out that rational people govern their lives by the calculation of likelihood, not abstract possibility.

One aspect of this issue which seems to me particularly relevant, but which McCracken does not discuss, is the *American* framework within which nuclear power was developed. A major element in the public resistance to nuclear power is our historic abundance of fossil fuels, which makes it difficult for Americans to believe that a new source of power is needed at all. Beyond that, however, there is the fact that, as I noted at the outset, the development of nuclear power started with the Manhattan Project during the war, and clearly involved public dangers so great as to impose a clear-cut need for government regulation. The difficulty here was that the regulatory system had to be developed *at the same time* as the technology—in contrast to the sphere of building regulations, for example, which could rely on centuries of experience with building successes and, more important, building failures. Simultaneously, government was needed to provide a stimulus to this new industry whose economics depended in large part on projected shortages of fossil fuels and rises in their costs. And the development of the technology, with some government help, had to take place against a constantly changing set of worries and assumptions about geological safety, reactor design, proximity to population concentrations, and so on.

Another subject that goes undiscussed by McCracken has to do with some of the detailed technical problems that now trouble the nuclear industry, such as the useful life of the steel-reactor vessels, and also of the steam generators. Both the advocates and the opponents of nuclear power are currently tangled in controversy over whether the design of these vital pieces of equipment can be improved, and whether the shortcomings that have been discovered in practice are dangerous or merely expensive to correct.

But these are minor faults in a book that deserves to be vigorously applauded for its seriousness, its intellectual courage—and its fine prose. Unfortunately few of these qualities are evident in *Nuclear Power: Both Sides*. Many of the essays in the collection are interesting, but since they were written independently, with no opportunity for either of the two or more writers on the same theme to confront the work of the writer with whom they disagree, the arguments have a way of slipping by each other without touching.

As for *Nukespeak*, it not only makes no pretense to objectivity, its authors and compilers seem to believe they can destroy the nuclear-power movement magically, by incantation. Samuel McCracken, who has no faith in the magic of the word to erase *his* opponents, nevertheless puts them to shame by his determination to address their arguments not at their most foolish but at their strongest, and then by systematically and definitively answering them.

Return to the Fold?

AN ORPHAN IN HISTORY: RETRIEVING A JEWISH LEGACY. By PAUL COWAN. *Doubleday. 246 pp. $15.95.*

Reviewed by RUTH R. WISSE

A NUMBER of American Jews who once seemed thoroughly indifferent to their Jewishness have begun to move back into the Jewish sphere and to make their "return" a matter of public record. In a recent cover story in *Esquire*, the actress Barbra Streisand describes her latest film, *Yentl*, based on a story by Isaac Bashevis Singer, as part of an attempt at posthumous reconciliation with her father, a Hebrew teacher who died when she was quite young. The article also reports that Miss Streisand is studying Talmud and that she supports

* By a curious inversion, some detractors of nuclear power decry it as a manifestation of capitalism, forgetting that the Soviet Union has an extensive nuclear-power program, in which far less attention is paid to public safety than here, while France's nuclear program, soon to produce as much as 75 percent of that nation's electricity, is entirely government-owned and operated.

RUTH R. WISSE *teaches Yiddish literature at McGill University and is currently working on a book about Yiddish writers in America.*

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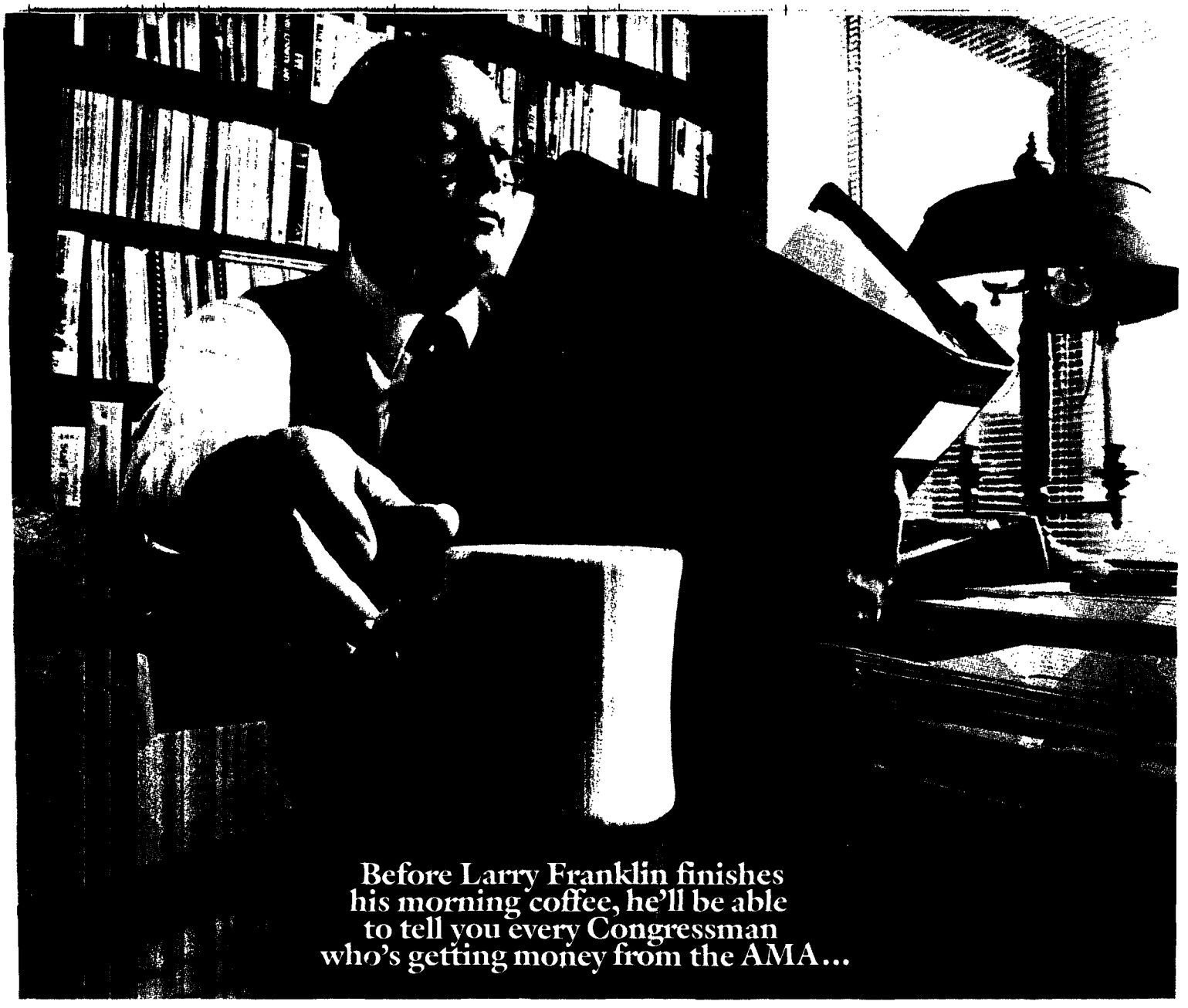

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Jewish education, and it ends with her quoting Maimonides.

The novelist Anne Roiphe, whose essay embracing the Christmas holiday drew a great protest when it appeared in the New York *Times* several years ago, has since written *Generation Without Memory*, in which she examines what she may have forfeited as a Jew in adopting Christian culture. By the end of her exposition she is able to draw up a pact with Judaism: if it can be made to satisfy six conditions (she is at least that much less demanding than God) she is prepared to consider it seriously.

Such individual acts of reappraisal, whatever their limitations, are a step or two beyond the cultic masquerade of the recent past when so many young American Jews adopted new identities in spectacular acts of conversion. That process may occasionally have seen the metamorphosis of a West Coast surfer into a yeshivah student, but on the whole, for those seeking an alternative to this deceitful world, the Moonies proved far more alluring than the Hasidim. The current religious revival, also among Jews, is part of a soberer America, and involves some thoughtful reviews of home, family life, community, and country.

This is certainly true of Paul Cowan's autobiographical odyssey, *An Orphan in History: Retrieving a Jewish Legacy*. As a long-time staff writer for the *Village Voice* and a contributor to other national periodicals, Cowan has conducted his transformation very much in the public eye. Five years ago, in the New York *Times Magazine*, he reported on the founding of a one-afternoon-a-week Jewish school that a group of parents had organized on Manhattan's Upper West Side. This then marked the high point of Cowan's Jewish affiliation, and I remember thinking at the time that in American Jewish life less must surely be more: never had so little been so highly publicized before so many. But it is clear from Cowan's new book that establishing the school was an earlier phase in an ongoing process, and that in his case the decision to live as a Jew has generated its own momentum. Since Cowan tells the story of his evolution in candid personal detail, he leaves a well-documented contemporary record—though one with more information than insight.

Now in his early forties, Cowan was born into a wealthy, assimilated family. His father, a noted TV producer and executive, had changed his name from Cohen as part of an attempt to sever all connections with his family. His mother's parents had embraced Christian Science when she was still a child. The holidays celebrated in the Cowan household were Christmas and Easter. The private school to which Paul was sent was Episcopalian. Of course the family still recognized itself as Jewish, and the prejudice the young Cowan experienced at school reinforced this identification negatively. But Cowan knew little about Judaism or the Jews. It was not surprising that in the early 1960's, just out of Harvard College, he should marry a New England Protestant and become an active member of the New Left. He happened to be spending a year in Israel when he first read of the civil-rights movement in Mississippi and decided to return to America to become part of this "secular creed." His Jewishness, filtered through what he describes as his mother's amorphous guilt, was expressed in identification with the underdog and a resolve to come to his assistance.

The book gives a brief summary of Cowan's career as a political activist and Peace Corpsman, of his post-60's disenchantment with certain aspects of political life, and of his simultaneous desire for deeper roots. When in the course of an assignment Cowan discovered the Jewish poor of the Lower East Side, and an Orthodox community closer to the immigrant source, he became excited by his own connection with this tradition, and moved by nostalgia to explore it as a subject.

The sudden death of his parents in a fire added urgency to his search. He set out to learn all he could about his family, which resulted in an interesting introduction to immigrant ingenuity and adaptation since the 1840's. As the research seemed to lead inexorably to Jewish origins, the pursuit of family data necessarily became combined with a self-education in Jewish history. In telling his story, Cowan shows how closely the two strands became intertwined.

The account of the two families from whom Paul Cowan derives is the best part of the book. The chapters on his father's Lithuanian-based clan with its proud intellectual ambition, and his mother's equally prestigious family which came from Abenheim in the Rhineland and founded the Spiegel mail-order company in Chicago, are decent historical reconstructions. Though Cowan lacks the background and the intellectual capacities that might have transformed these family sagas into documents of social history, the information he offers is sufficiently compelling, and the contrast between the families sufficiently dramatic, first to whet and then to satisfy the reader's curiosity. Unfortunately, the author's account of his *own* cultural development, which was to have formed the heart of this book, lacks any such sustaining power, and in fact evades opportunities for true analysis.

THIS is not the first *bildungs*-autobiography that Cowan has written. In 1970 he published *The Making of an Un-American*, which, with the same kind of personal detail that characterizes the present book, told the story of his earlier radicalization. An angry document, it was prefaced by a "prayer" for his children taken from the "great Cuban revolutionary," José Martí: "*Los niños son la esperanza del futuro del mundo.*" In those days Cowan wanted to fling open the doors to the sterile paradise of America in the following manner:

> . . . when I read that the Vietcong had attacked the American embassy in Saigon during the Tet offensive, I was almost able to imagine that I was a member of the raiding party. How I would have loved to invade that segregated building and give all the information I could find there to my government's enemy, the people.

To judge from the intensity of this rhetoric as compared with anything in the present book, Cowan was far more dedicated as an anti-American than he is today as a Jew.

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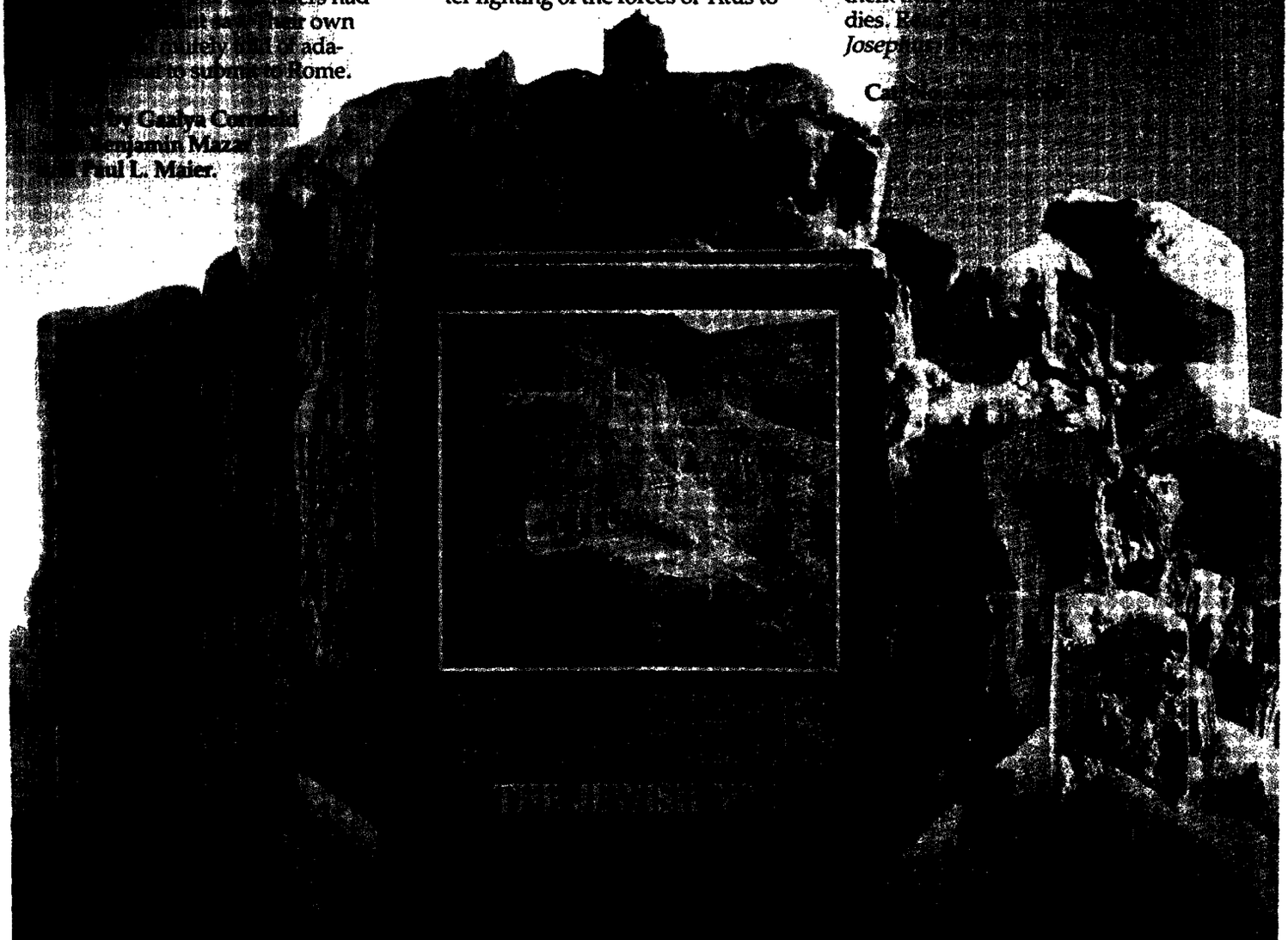

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Now the development of a rabid revolutionary sympathizer into a synagogue member in good standing—and in less than a decade's time!—is potentially a fascinating story, one that could help to explain the nature of a whole generation. Yet far from wishing to clarify this development, Cowan appears to have undertaken this book, and perhaps even returned to Judaism, as a means of avoiding such a clarification. Many episodes and passages from his earlier autobiography are recycled in the present one without any sense of contradiction, even when they are put to startlingly different use.

Thus in *The Making of an Un-American*, Cowan's education at Choate and later at Harvard opens his eyes to class privilege, and to the self-serving liberalism of his professors. Nearly suffocated in this atmosphere of prejudice and conformism, he is relieved only by his almost "religious" exposure to the folk singer Pete Seeger, who becomes for a year his "spiritual President." In the current book, we are treated to the same recoil from his educational environment, but attributed now to a pervasive anti-Semitism at Choate, with no reference at all to Seeger, Che Guevara, or any of the leftist causes which, Cowan once wrote, he had been drawn to as a consequence of that environment. The second book seems to have been designed not to interpret an evolution from the first but rather to build an entirely new self-image out of the same raw material.

Whether this is the result of deliberate decision or, as appears more likely, of a kind of intellectual obliviousness, the product is a laundered tale that reduces all conflict and all issues of political choice to banalities, avoiding the kind of confrontation with the immediate past that alone could have made this book an important document.

Of his thoughts and actions in the radical 60's, Cowan now has only this to say:

> Whatever its flaws, the movement achieved some astonishing successes: it stopped segregation in the South and it stopped the war in Vietnam. Its own ending was terribly sour, because so many of us were so young, because our cultural diversity was so vast, because the forces we were facing were so great—and because of the paradoxical fact that we wanted to form a spiritual community out of something as evanescent and changeable as politics. But the movement's early years—which are rarely described any more—represented some of the happiest days of our lives.

Thus in the full light of subsequent events does a person who was once prepared to hand over the American embassy to the Vietcong write the moment off a decade later without a hint of self-scrutiny, let alone of accountability. The irresponsibility of Cowan's generational cohort is still taken by him as its principal charm; now an adult, he remains prepared to blame all the "flaws" of the movement on vague external "forces"—and on his own unrealized spirituality.

BUT even if Cowan does not choose to recognize it, this book is obviously a sequel, and cannot be appreciated except as an outgrowth of its predecessor. The author describes himself as one who has never felt comfortable in aggressive, competitive situations, but has looked for ways of helping those who might need him—new immigrants in Israel, blacks in the South, the poor of Ecuador. He appears hard hit by the realization that those whom he has desired to assist are after no more than what he already has—wealth, freedom, privilege, the condition from which he recoils. His well-meaning efforts were rejected by Southern blacks in the early 1960's; the Ecuadorans he met while serving in the Peace Corps suspected him of imperialist designs. Finally he found among the poor Jews of the Lower East Side the one club of the underprivileged (to invert Groucho Marx) that had to accept him as a member. In fact, the embracing warmth of these people, who received him as a fellow Jew, made him feel at home at just the moment in his personal life he needed it the most.

The series of articles about his rediscovered Jewish roots that Cowan published in the mid-70's in the *Village Voice* showed how much this sense of attraction owed to the secular creed of the "Un-American" he had become. The very title of the series, "Jews Without Money, Revisited," spoke to this connection, invoking an earlier book by the talented American Communist writer, Michael Gold, who in the 1930's had defended the Jews *because* they were impoverished immigrants and on that account deserving of sympathy. Obvious in this line of defense is a rejection of non-poor Jews, which Cowan made explicit in moralistic attacks on Jewish philanthropists.

JUDAISM thus seems to have become appealing to Cowan not through the grandeur of its spiritual vision, not through the exigencies of its Law, not by virtue of Jewish cultural accomplishment, but because Jews had been revealed as victims of society, and hence a suitable subject of approbation. Yet this too is not the whole story, because as it reaches its present conclusion Cowan's autobiography takes an ironic twist. By discovering in Jews an object of his solicitude, he was able to come to terms with his desire, by now grown quite pronounced, for a happy, stable life with his wife and children, surrounded by friends from his own cultural and social milieu. According to his received ideological categories, this kind of American family life, in good circumstances among people of one's own background and class, should have been considered bourgeois and contemptible. By defining himself as an orphan in history—a cultural victim of American society—he was able to justify his reclamation of Judaism and along with it the good life that his parents had prepared for him as an educated, affluent, decent American.

All this may signify a happy ending: the errant heir repossessing his birthright after a long and culturally arduous journey. And indeed it has been hailed as just such a happy ending by sympathetic reviewers and elated spokesmen of the organized American Jewish community, who have taken the author to their hearts and proclaimed his book a sign that a "lost generation" is now returning to the fold. But a word of caution to these celebrants:

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it is not yet clear whether Cowan's adoption of Judaism has room in it for *them*. After all, these guardians of the institutional interests of the Jewish community do not qualify as "*niños*." For Cowan to affirm a commonality with them would require not only entry into bourgeois society—a condition he has met—but an acknowledgment of that society's objective and enduring worth. Cowan's next autobiography may reveal whether this will have proved possible.

How We Began

THE FALL OF THE FIRST BRITISH EMPIRE: ORIGINS OF THE WAR OF AMERICAN INDEPENDENCE. By ROBERT W. TUCKER and DAVID C. HENDRICKSON. *Johns Hopkins University Press. 450 pp. $24.00.*

Reviewed by FORREST MCDONALD

THE tension between history and myth—even the difference between them—is not generally understood. The Greeks are said to have invented history by separating the two; history, wrote Thucydides, was that which could be proved to have happened. Verifiability is crucial to history if it is to serve its purpose, which is to instruct us by orienting us in time and by providing a perspective whereby we can escape the provincialism of the present. Myths, on the other hand, may or may not have some basis in past actuality, but that is irrelevant to their function. The function of myths, like that of rituals, symbols, and conventions, is social: to bind a people together voluntarily and harmoniously as one people. As memories of shared experiences help hold a marriage or a family together, so myths—what people believe to be the shared experiences of their ancestors—help hold a society together.

The question is central to the present work of Robert W. Tucker and David C. Hendrickson, for they have set themselves the formidable task of separating the mythological perception of the American Revolution from what can be proved to have happened. The mythical version, which arose from what Americans professed to believe at the time and which they came unquestioningly to believe throughout the 19th century, was roughly as follows. Prior to 1763, Americans were dutiful subjects who enjoyed the rights of Englishmen, including the right to live under laws of their own making; acquiesced in parliamentary regulation of trade within the empire but were not subject to interference in their internal affairs; carried more than a fair share of the burden of their own defense; and produced the goods and provided the markets that had made Britain rich and powerful.

But during the Seven Years' War —the received version continues— the British blundered by not destroying France, thereby necessitating an expensive postwar colonial military establishment, and blundered again in the peace negotiations by not taking the rich French sugar islands, thereby throwing away an easy source of income for financing the colonial military force. The 1764 Sugar Act, the 1765 Stamp Act, and the 1767 Townshend Duties were radically unconstitutional efforts, in defiance of all precedent, to extract taxes from the colonists without their consent. The colonists resisted and largely defeated these and other constitutional innovations; but the British stubbornly insisted, in the Declaratory Act of 1766, that Parliament had the right in principle to legislate for the colonies "in all cases whatsoever." After 1770 Lord North's ministry pursued a persistent policy of forcing a showdown on the issue. Until the very end, the Americans rightly insisted that the empire could be saved if Britain would only abandon its pernicious attempt to pervert the "ancient constitution" and restore things to the way they were in 1763. Britain's answer to these protests was to send foreign mercenaries to enforce its unconstitutional laws, and the Americans had no choice but to declare their independence.

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This interpretation was challenged early in the 20th century by the "Imperial School" associated with George L. Beer, which contended that the imperial system, far from being repressive, worked greatly to the advantage of the colonists. The Imperial School came into vogue for a time during and after World War I, partly because American historians, as their share of the wartime propaganda effort, rewrote history to minimize past Anglo-American frictions, and partly because class-based interpretations were "in" for a while, and these insisted that the Revolution was less an Anglo-American dispute over home rule than a contest between upper and lower classes in America over the question, "Who Shall Rule at Home?"

The Imperial School and the class-struggle version were ultimately rejected both as non-history and as unsatisfactory myth, and modern scholars have returned to the original interpretation. Tucker and Hendrickson quote Edmund Morgan, Jack Greene, and a host of other leading contemporary students of the period; though these modify and sharpen, their final verdict is essentially the one that 18th-century Americans claimed was true and 19th-century Americans believed was true.

Do we have, then, a rare instance in which myth and history are the same? Tucker and Hendrickson think not. With meticulous care they have reexamined every step of the process toward separation, and in every instance they find the traditional account unacceptable. Much of the supposed British blundering, for example, arose from a premise that the future would show to be unsound—that political separation would destroy the mutually advantageous Anglo-American trade—but no one could have known that before the Revolution, and within the framework of the assumption, British policy was entirely reasonable. As for Lord North, his policies more closely approximated appeasement than provocation.

On the whole, the authors argue, the British were willing to make every concession to preserve the empire short of sacrificing the fundamental principle that the Glorious Revolution had embodied in the British constitution, namely, that sovereignty resided in Crown-in-Parliament. The Americans, whatever their particular arguments in resisting particular measures, were willing to stay in the empire only on condition that that principle be rejected as far as they were concerned. In effect, what was at issue was different understandings of the way things had been before 1763—rival and incompatible myths. The issue was joined with the passage of the Declaratory Act: thenceforth any American cries for a return to 1763 were disingenuous or futile or both, for they demanded the one thing the mother country could not concede.

The cumulative effect of the authors' point-by-point analysis is powerfully persuasive, though this is not to say that their craftsmanship is entirely unflawed. The argument is occasionally tedious, circuitous, and repetitive. It leaves out of account a fact that might have strengthened it considerably: that most Americans, until 1775, genuinely revered George III and looked upon him as a Bolingbrokean Patriot King who would exert the prerogative to preserve the constitution and protect their liberties.

More importantly, the authors assume that, for practical purposes, the colonists shared the same basic outlook—an assumption that is simply unfounded. The tobacco colonies and New England had long regarded the empire as being at best of mixed value to them, and they were suffering economic dislocations after 1763, whereas the Middle Colonies and the lower South had fully appreciated the advantages of empire and were now thriving. Moreover, New England and the tobacco colonies, having matured in the turbulent 17th century, having had little direct intercourse with Britain during the 18th, and having relatively homogeneous populations, shared (albeit from opposite perspectives) a common heritage in which resistance, deposition, and even regicide were in the last resort acceptable in the defense of liberty. The other colonies, having come to maturity only after the Glorious Revolution, having had regular contact with the mother country via both commerce and immigration during the 18th century, and having dangerously disruptive elements in their populations, thought of deposition and regicide with unspeakable horror, if indeed they were able to think of them at all. These differences in circumstances and traditions predisposed the older group of colonies toward radicalism and the newer toward caution.

Again, the authors assume that American attitudes remained fundamentally unchanged throughout the long imperial crisis; and that assumption is likewise questionable. When British troops were dispatched to Boston in 1768, Sam Adams called upon Massachusetts farmers to take up arms, and none responded; and the colonial legislature, in a petition to the Crown, expressly acknowledged Parliament as "the supreme legislative of the empire." When the troops were sent in again in 1774, every Middlesex village and farm sprang to arms, and the Parliament's authority was absolutely denied. A similar radicalization took place in the tobacco colonies. What had happened in between was a flukish credit boom that began in 1770 and collapsed in 1773. During the boom, New England farmers and Virginia planters bought, on credit, unprecedented quantities of British goods, and after the collapse they faced the imminent prospect of economic ruin. The Middle Colonies and the lower South, meanwhile, were largely unaffected by these developments. Their leaders were desperately seeking an accommodation as late as the spring of 1776; the leaders in the Potomac-New England axis were thinking of independence as early as the winter of 1774-75.

Whether these flaws will prove fatal when the book is reviewed by the historical establishment, I hesitate to guess. Despite my demurrers, I find the authors' case intellectually appealing. Nobody was especially to blame, no one fully comprehended the situation, and in the last analysis there was not much that anyone could have done to avoid the rupture. That accords with my understanding of the way

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things happen. On the other hand, it remains to be seen whether history, a mere cerebral exercise, will prove as potent as the active social force that is myth—even among historians.

Economic Ideology

ANATOMIE D'UN SPECTRE: L'ÉCONOMIE DU SOCIALISME RÉEL. By ALAIN BESANÇON. *Paris: Calmann-Levy, 1981.*

Reviewed by MICHELE DOHNE

Two earlier books by Alain Besançon, the French historian and scholar of Soviet affairs, *The Soviet Syndrome* (Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1978) and *The Rise of the Gulag* (Continuum, 1981), dealt with Leninist ideology—its role in Soviet foreign policy and its "intellectual origins" in Russian history. *Anatomie d'un spectre* ("Anatomy of a Specter") focuses on the *economic* ideology of Leninism. By tracing the evolution of the "objective laws" of socialism under Lenin and Stalin, Besançon says, it is possible to see what really holds the Soviet economic system together.

Leninist ideology adopted from Bakunin the idea that "the spirit of destruction is the same as the spirit of creation." Because he believed that society changed from one form to another by a natural, dialectical movement, Lenin considered his first task to be the reversal of capitalism so as to make a space where socialism could grow. In fact he uprooted not just Russian capitalism, but the entire economy. When socialism still did not appear on this blank tablet, Leninist ideology had an explanation: what was preventing the birth of socialism was that, in spite of appearances, capitalism continued to exist in the form of vicious habits or malevolence on the part of Soviet citizens. It was therefore necessary to reeducate society. Power, which was to have been dissolved rapidly in the self-organization of society, became instead the unique hope of socialism, its *ultima ratio*.

But the idea of unlimited power, power over both consumption and production, would seem to contradict the idea of socialism as a natural form, and thus to render it illegitimate. Stalin's answer to this dilemma was that society accomplishes its economic and cultural reeducation by passing through a series of stages, in the course of which work, initially only a way of earning a living, becomes the unchangeable and intangible base of social existence. In socialism, economics and economic policy coincide, and the laws of the state (or its directives) become the same as the "objective laws" of socialism.

Because they believed or came to believe in the laws of the socialist economy, Besançon says, the Soviet leaders constructed the system they did, trusting the Soviet state organs to "assure the eagerly expressed sense of perfect liberty in the reeducated." The important point, however, is not so much the specific content of these so-called objective laws of socialism as that there *be* a law, for the notion of law makes sense in a domain as uncertain as economics only to the extent that it imposes necessity on human free will. And here we come to the heart of the Soviet system.

The principle of the Soviet economy, what gives it its special characteristics, is the idea of socialism, but this is actually an empty idea. The defect of Soviet "socialism," Besançon argues, is not technical but ontological: the system is kept from destroying all goods and all human beings in the course of its project of "destruction/creation" by the need to protect power; and the real economic art of the Soviet government consists in the search for the optimal compromise between the destruction of "capitalism" and the preservation of power. In this way the idea of socialism, an idea which a century ago promised to promote the reign of reason over

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blind necessity, has itself become "an invisible hand, unmanageable, unknowable, malevolent."

The Soviet Union is the world's number-one military power, it has minerals and political resources, and its "production" is considerable, but it is not, Besançon asserts, the world's second economic power. What is the internal value of the ruble, or the value of inferior goods? The Western economic literature which holds the Soviet economy to be reformable implicitly assumes that the system has the same ends as all economic systems, namely, the production of wealth (and also the Western goal of development); that its methods, though different from ours, are rationally prescribed by these ends; that the gap between the theoretical and the real functioning of the model is due to historical tradition and the personalities of individual leaders; and that the gap can be diminished, corrected, so that development can become more rapid. But what really holds the Soviet economic system together, according to Besançon, lies outside the economic sphere. Since political power and the need to conserve it are what gives the Soviet economy its structure, an economic problem like the "flow" of consumption (for example) is managed as a political problem, as in Poland.

"In everything touching work, exchange, i.e., economic life," Besançon writes, "the Soviet citizen seems trapped by something absurd, uncontrollable, paralyzing—socialism collapsing heavily on him." In the absence of internal motives for growth—since all initiative lies with the planners—the system falls in on itself. Planning, in fact, disorganizes production as much as it organizes it. Nevertheless, internal attempts at reforming the system, if they threaten the control of the planners, are seen as challenging legitimacy; reformers are said to be opposing the "building of socialism," a crime which can result in a term in a prison camp. Thus again an ideology which serves the interests of state power triumphs over rational economic considerations.

BESANÇON's essay touches on many issues in the relation of the Soviet system to Western economies: Soviet modernization, the supposed convergence of its system with a market economy, its ability to overtake the non-socialist world (or destroy it and transform it on its own model). The "anatomy" of the Soviet economic system he provides is not really a model of the economy, and it is an overstatement to argue that economics is of concern to the Soviet leadership *only* when it threatens power. But Besançon's discussion of Leninist economic ideology offers a critical counterweight to those Western economists who regularly fail to take into account the degree to which the preservation of power does take precedence over economic considerations in Soviet economic policy. Forced-labor camps, an impoverished countryside, widespread alcoholism, corruption, disorganization, irrationality—nothing the West calls economics can adequately explain these, any more than it can explain the recent "militarization" of striking workers in Poland. There are some phenomena, Besançon makes clear, that can only be comprehensively understood within the context of Leninist ideology—which is why the ability of Western governments to put pressure on the Soviet Union for internal reform and more rational policies toward the West depends on an appreciation not just of the "ordinary" realities of the Soviet economic system but also of its use of ideology as "the sign, the emblem of power."

Man of the Century

KOESTLER: A BIOGRAPHY. By IAIN HAMILTON. *Macmillan. 398 pp. $19.95.*

Reviewed by
WERNER J. DANNHAUSER

ARTHUR KOESTLER is seventy-seven years old now, almost as old as the century in which he has participated so ardently that he is certain to be remembered as one of its representative men. The things he has done and suffered illustrate our time almost too vividly. He has wandered in exile and lived in many places. He has embraced Communism and after that become one of its most articulate opponents. He has been one of fascism's victims and democracy's champions. A writer, he has been forced to change languages as well as homelands. An intellectual, he has straddled the "two cultures" by writing novels as well as scientific works. A public man, he has been no stranger to private griefs, having attempted suicide more than once. The sheer range and diversity of Koestler's life are illustrated by the hundreds of people whose help Iain Hamilton acknowledges in preparing this book, among them T.S. Eliot, Menachem Begin, E.M. Forster, Harry Truman, Konrad Lorenz, and Richard Nixon.

To write a boring biography of a man like Koestler would seem difficult, but Iain Hamilton has done his best. Hamilton is, among other things, a poet, but the book is drearily prosaic for long stretches. An excess of detail alternates with curious omissions—Koestler's tangled friendship with Walter Benjamin is not even mentioned, for example, and Hamilton has next to nothing to say about the French philosopher Merleau-Ponty's attempt in 1947 to discredit Koestler's novel, *Darkness at Noon*, a crucial event in the political-intellectual history of the postwar era. Still, if this is not the definitive biography of Koestler, it does at least set forth in orderly fashion the landmarks of an unusually eventful life.

ARTHUR KOESTLER was born in Budapest in 1905 into an assimilated Jewish family. His own assimilationism took the form not merely of indifference to things Jewish, but of an active determination to make the Jews exactly like other people—so much so that they would disappear as Jews. In practice, and all his life Koestler has labored fiercely to erase all differences between his theories and his practices, this meant that Koestler, the assimilationist, paradoxically embraced not only Zionism but the extreme version of it propounded by Ze'ev Jabotinsky, since this was the one that promised to normalize the Jews in the most thorough manner. In 1926,

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at the age of twenty-one, Koestler left Vienna, where he was studying engineering and science, and tried to settle in Palestine. Although he gave it up after a few months, he soon went back and stayed until 1929, this time as a correspondent for the Ullstein newspaper chain.

Koestler's rise in the Ullstein hierarchy was unusually rapid. Journalism turned out to be the ideal medium for his genius at simplifying—sometimes oversimplifying—the most abstruse matters (Koestler's only real rival as a popularizer is H.G. Wells). As a newspaperman, he educated not only others but himself, and almost simultaneously discovered two of his great passions, science and Communism.

Koestler had been working on and off for Ullstein for several years, both as a science editor and as a political correspondent, when, on December 31, 1931, he applied for membership in the German Communist party. The same quest for certainty which underlay his fascination with science and the laws of the universe was obviously also at work in his fascination with what he understood to be Marx's laws of society. Having joined the party, Koestler, typically enough, was not content to be a mere foot soldier, but insisted on journeying to the Soviet Union to see the revolution at first hand.

Whatever misgivings the young Koestler may have felt in the workers' paradise—and there were some, which he explained away on grounds of Russian backwardness—were shelved temporarily by the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War in 1936. Koestler, naturally, took off for Spain at once (with press credentials supplied by the Hungarian newspaper *Pester Lloyd*), and within a few months was captured, imprisoned, and very nearly executed by Franco's forces (he had decided to investigate conditions on the fascist side). But if the conduct of the fascists came as no surprise, the brutality of the Communists did. Like Orwell, whose experiences in the Spanish Civil War paralleled his own, Koestler grew increasingly disillusioned as he watched the Communists manipulate the war for their own purposes and ruthlessly eradicate all independent leftist activity. By the time the war was over, Koestler could never again be a Communist, though his actual break with the party was a long and painful process.

By 1941, however, the break was complete, as is obvious from the book he published that year, *Darkness at Noon*, the novel about Stalin's purge trials which made him famous. Koestler used that fame as a weapon against Soviet Communism. In the 40's and 50's, his labors to shore up the faltering will of the West can only be described as heroic. Traveling, lecturing, writing, and debating in Europe as well as the United States, he tirelessly instructed the democracies on the nature of Soviet totalitarianism and, as usual, not only spoke but acted—Koestler was perhaps the single most important force behind the formation of the Congress for Cultural Freedom. It is hard today to remember—but one does not forget with impunity—the heavy price, in loneliness, slander, ostracism, that was exacted from ex-Communists like Koestler who told the truth about Communism in those years.

In the 50's, Koestler bade farewell to politics, but hardly to combat and polemics. His new enemy was science in its reductionist mode, with particular emphasis on its seemingly incurable tendency to understand—or rather misunderstand—higher things in terms of lower things. Now his targets were no longer Stalin and his successors, but B.F. Skinner and his fellow behaviorists. Although he turned out a whole series of books on everything from the history of astronomy to the roots of coincidence, Koestler's triumphs were fewer and more ambiguous in the field of science than they had been in the field of politics.

WITH Koestler's turn to (and on) science, the biographer's interest in his subject seems to wane as well. Less than a third of the book is devoted to Koestler's life after 1956. Hamilton's failure to do justice to the later Koestler is, however, easier to condone than his failure adequately to portray either Koestler's nature or the cast of his mind.

So far as the first goes, one sympathizes with the biographer: Koestler is clearly one of those people who are difficult to know, the proverbial bundle of contradictions in whom shyness and arrogance, rudeness and delicacy coexist uneasily. But if Koestler's innermost self remains hidden, even after some 30 books, the landscape of his mind is far more accessible, to the reader if not to his biographer, if only because Koestler has expressed himself on almost every subject under the sun.

The first quality of Koestler's mind to strike us is his intellectual courage. Even when that courage turns into mere rashness, as it sometimes does, it compels admiration, because Koestler so often does us the favor of uttering publicly what many have entertained privately. (His flirtation with Lamarckianism provides a good example.) Koestler never fears ridicule; indeed, he sometimes seems to court it.

This independence of mind explains not only why Koestler could not remain in the Communist party but why, after quitting, he became so resolute and outspoken a foe. But why did he join in the first place? Probably because there is a certain affinity between Koestler's mind and that of Marx himself: he too is more eager to change the world than to understand it, and he too suffers from the illusion that where problems exist, solutions cannot be far behind.

KOESTLER's thinking can be disappointing because it manifests a nervous impatience that is injurious to thought as such. He sometimes misunderstands because he understands too quickly, reducing complex questions to formulas, and then jumping, almost literally it seems, to conclusions. His thinking about the Jewish problem furnishes perhaps the saddest example of these flaws of mind.

Koestler apparently had no Jewish education at all, and no appreciation of the richness of the Jewish tradition (not to speak of its claim to embody the truth). But growing up as he did in this century and in Central Europe, he was bound to come into contact with the most virulent kind of anti-Semitism. His response was typical: something had to be done *immediately*, and he did

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it, becoming a fervent Zionist overnight on, so to speak, logical grounds alone. The Jews were hated because they had no country —therefore they must get a country.

Koestler seriously believed that with the establishment of a Jewish state, the Jewish question would not simply be ameliorated but would vanish: Jews would decide either to live there, or to abandon their Jewishness. Thus it made perfect sense that when part of Palestine became Israel he not only lost interest in the fledgling state, but went even further. Having argued that there was no longer any compelling reason for modern Jews to remain Jews, he next proceeded to argue, in effect, that they were never Jewish in the first place. (In *The Thirteenth Tribe*, Koestler tried to demonstrate that modern Jews are descended not from the ancient Jews but from a Russian tribe, the Khazars, who converted to Judaism in the early Middle Ages.)

SINCE Hamilton shares many of Koestler's prejudices—going so far as to dismiss Yiddish as a "medieval language"—he cannot be expected to see that Koestler's failure to do justice to the intricacies of the Jewish problem is a specific case of a more general failure in Koestler's political thought and theorizing. Koestler tends to think that *all* human problems are susceptible of solution by rational tinkering, a habit of mind that once led him in all seriousness to search for a pill that would cure human self-destructiveness. When he speculates about political matters Koestler is always intense and frequently dazzling, but a certain crudeness often vitiates his forcefulness.

In this respect, his celebrated essay on *The Yogi and the Commissar* comes to mind. Many of my generation greeted it at the time (1945) as the first and last word on the perplexing relationship between means and ends in political life, only to discover later that it has nothing at all memorable to say about what may be a more serious political problem, the relationship among competing ends and the need to give priority to some of them at the expense of others.

As a teacher of politics, Koestler can disappoint in other ways as well. Too often his tone is that of the autodidact reinventing the wheel. He gives the impression of having read more widely than deeply, of arguing too hotly to be fully persuasive, and of being a bit cold toward the human heart. This last is especially true of Koestler's fiction, which is overly schematic, and too insistent on making and scoring points. In addition, he has never been able to depict women convincingly in his novels, and has admitted as much in one of his disarmingly candid autobiographical self-assessments.

The great exception to all these reservations is *Darkness at Noon*. The novel did more than simply expose the inner workings of Communism; it showed how Communism corrupts the soul of victim and victimizer alike. In his delineation of the bizarre logic whereby the old Bolshevik, Rubashov, the novel's protagonist, assents to his own destruction, Koestler gave the first plausible explanation of the psychological processes at work behind the great purge trials—a spectacle which had mystified observers in the West.

When one thinks of this great accomplishment, one is reminded once more how much Arthur Koestler has taught us all, and not only in that distinguished novel. He deserves our gratitude.

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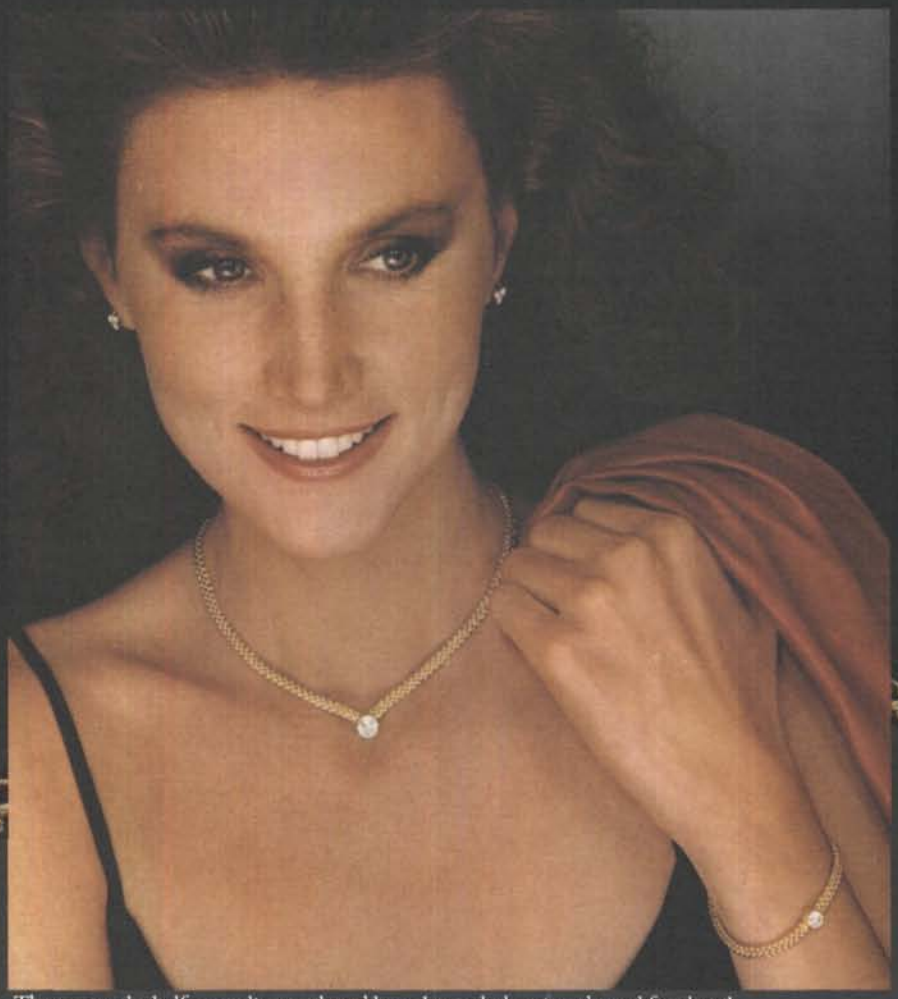
A carat or more.
A rare diamond. For that rare individual who never doubted you'd make it.



The one and a half carat diamond necklace shown below is enlarged for detail.

A diamond of a carat or more. There's only one in a million.

Every diamond is rare. But of all diamonds found, a solitaire of a carat or more is only one in a million.

And, like love, becomes more precious with time.

A miracle among miracles. Born from the earth. Reborn on a woman.

The extraordinary diamond of a carat or more.

Show the world you couldn't have made it without her.

A diamond is forever. De Beers.

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